



2013

Annual Report of the Department of Education and Skills

MISSION

Our mission is to enable learners to achieve their full potential and contribute to Ireland's economic, social and cultural development.

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Foreword by the Minister

I welcome the publication of the 2013 Annual Report which provides an insight into the diverse work undertaken by the Department during the year and highlights its important multi-faceted role in contributing to Irish society. I am pleased to acknowledge the achievements of the Department in 2013 and, in particular, the on-going progress which has been made by it and its agencies in implementing the extensive programme of reform throughout the education sector.

The establishment of SOLAS, together with the re-structuring and streamlining of the VEC system through the establishment of the Education and Training Boards, represents the most significant change in the training sector since the establishment of FAS itself over 25 years ago. The State is investing significant resources in the further education and training sector in recognition of the necessity to build a vibrant, efficient and effective skills, training and further education sector that is well integrated into the overall education and training system.

In line with the Government's Action Plan for Jobs and Pathways to Work, the Department continued in 2013 to develop high quality education and training to support unemployed people in their return to employment by the provision of re-skilling opportunities appropriate to their needs.

At school level, the implementation of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy to 2020 was progressed with the expansion of standardised testing in schools, an increase in the time spent on literacy and numeracy in the classroom and the development of literacy and numeracy units on initial and continuing teacher training courses. The rollout of Project Maths also continued in second level schools with a view to its full implementation for the Leaving Certificate 2014. Work on Junior Cycle Reform included the development of the new Junior Cycle Student Awards programme, along with the provision of support services and training for teachers and principals on the reforms, which will remain in place throughout the transition to the new programme.

In September 2013, I published a draft General Scheme for an Education (Admission to Schools) Bill, 2013 as well as draft regulations for discussion ahead of enacting legislation. These proposed regulations will underpin a fair and transparent enrolment process which is understood by all parents. It will, among other things, preclude school places being allocated on the basis of waiting lists and stop schools seeking deposits or payments as part of the admission process. The aim of this is to ensure that the way schools decide on applications is structured, fair and transparent and we also seek to remove the burden from parents of appealing school decisions.

At third level, a major re-organisation of the higher education sector is underway and this involves the provision for the creation of technological universities. The process to develop a new performance framework, which clearly sets out the Government's priorities and objectives for the higher education system was finalised and Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI) made significant improvements to its system and procedures to streamline the grant application, processing and payment processes.

One of the key successes of 2013 was the Presidency of the EU, the achievements of which include an agreement among Ministers for Education on two sets of Council Conclusions, which will strengthen the role of education and training in the EU to 2020, and agreement, at first reading, between the European Council, Parliament and Commission on *Erasmus+: the new EU programme for Education, Training, Youth and Sport for 2014-2020*.

I would like to thank the staff of the Department, staff in our agencies and those working at all levels throughout the wider education sector, for their hard work and commitment to progressing our challenging and ambitious education brief in 2013.

Ruairí Quinn
Minister for Education and Skills

Statement from the Secretary General

2013 was a successful, but challenging, year for the Department. Progress continued to be made on the implementation of new strategies and initiatives, while the provision of high quality services was maintained despite reduced resources. The implementation of the reform agenda, along with the fulfilment of the requirements of the public service agreements and the Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest Act (FEMPI), necessitated significant change to our systems and processes.

Despite these challenges, significant advances and reform have been realised over the past year including major reform of the further education and training sector, on-going progress in the implementation of curriculum reform and the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy, development of new and improved models of school inspections, the implementation of the Higher Education Strategy and reform of the higher education landscape and the drafting and enactment of landmark legislation, including the Education and Training Boards Act 2013 and section 30 of the Teaching Council Act 2001.

A particular focus of the Department's in 2013, and over the last number of years, has been the examination and improvement of our systems and business processes to meet new challenges. Enhancements were made to our ICT resources and applications during the year to allow for greater efficiency, improved data collection, the implementation of legislation as required and compliance with commitments arising from public service agreements. Changes were made to the school employee payrolls and the Online Claim System (OLCS) to implement the provisions of the Haddington Road Agreement and FEMPI, and to facilitate the implementation of Section 30 of the Teaching Council Act 2001, with effect from 28 January 2014.

The Post-Primary Online Database (PPOD) was successfully rolled out to all post-primary schools on esinet and work commenced on the development of a primary learner database called Primary Online Data (POD). The development of these databases will result in improvements to the Department's business processes due to the availability of more up-to-date data and provide valuable data for policy formulation. Other ICT developments include the implementation of performance budgeting on our Financial Management System and the development of an on-line application to facilitate schools applying for grants under the Summer Works Scheme in November 2013 on esinet.

A highlight of this year was the very successful Presidency of the EU. The success of the Presidency displays our ability to deliver despite all of the constraints. This Department alone organised and ran 10 major EU conferences or events during the Irish Presidency which would not have been possible without the very active participation and support from many staff across the whole Department.

I would like to thank all of the staff of the Department for their hard work in 2013. The progress achieved during the year has only been made possible through the high level of collaboration, commitment and flexibility shown by staff in adopting new work practices and cooperating with changes to meet fluctuating demands.

Seán Ó Foghlú
Secretary General

Review of the Year

The review of the year provides an overview of some of the more significant work undertaken by the Department in 2013. More detailed information on the initiatives referenced in this section can be found throughout the Report.

1.1 National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy and Curriculum Reform

The continued implementation of *the National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy among Children and Young People 2011-2020* remained a priority for the Department in 2013. Support was provided to the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) in its on-going work on curricular development, which focussed on the key priorities of the implementation of the Strategy, Project Maths and Junior Cycle reform. As the Strategy draws together the work of many areas within the Department, information in relation to literacy and numeracy developments in 2013 can be found under many headings.

1.2 Inspection and Quality Assurance in Schools

The publication of the *Chief Inspector's Report 2010-2012* ensured that for the first time statistical data was made available to the general public about quality and standards in schools and centres for education. The report focused in particular on the quality of management and leadership in primary and post-primary schools and on standards in teaching and learning, particularly the teaching and learning of English, Irish and Mathematics.

During the year the Inspectorate developed and piloted the use of teacher questionnaires in whole school evaluations, which complement the use of parent and pupil questionnaires.

The terms of reference for a major review of education in the Gaeltacht were also published.

Further information in relation to the work of the Inspectorate can be found at paragraph 3.9.

1.3 Regulation of the Teaching Profession

During 2013, the Department continued to liaise with the Teaching Council on a wide range of issues including entry requirements to initial teacher education, teacher supply, legislative amendments and preparations for the implementation of Section 30 of the Teaching Council Act and the Council's fitness to teach functions. More detailed information can be found at paragraphs 3.11 to 3.11.4

1.4 Tackling Bullying in Schools

A new Action Plan on Bullying, which sets out twelve actions to help prevent and tackle bullying in primary and post-primary schools was launched.

New anti-bullying procedures, which give direction and guidance to schools in preventing and tackling school-based bullying, were also developed, while an Anti-Bullying Training Programme for parents, which was jointly run by the National Parents Council Primary and National Parents Council Post-Primary, was also made available nationwide.

1.5 Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector

Work continued on the implementation of the Action Plan in response to the Report of the Advisory Group to the Forum on Patronage. A public consultation process was conducted in late 2013 to give parents, in particular, an opportunity to present their views on how primary schools can become more inclusive. The submissions received, together with the Forum Report findings

and recommendations, are being considered with a view to developing a White Paper outlining Government policy in this area. In response to recommendations for a process of patronage divestment, surveys of parental demand were undertaken in 38 areas during 2013.

1.6 School Admission Policies

In September, the Draft General Scheme for an Education (Admission to Schools) Bill, 2013 and the Draft Regulations on Content of Policy and Draft Regulations on Admission Process were published for discussion ahead of enacting legislation.

The aim in bringing forward these legislative proposals is to improve the admissions process and to ensure that the way schools decide on applications is structured, fair and transparent in order that every child is treated fairly.

1.7 Energy Efficiency in School Buildings

The Department continues to be at the forefront of design with respect to sustainable energy efficiency in school buildings. Our Technical Guidance Documents (TGDs) continue to set the benchmark for sustainable design in school buildings with a clear focus on energy efficiency which is supported by a strong research programme with forty research projects at various stages including the energy website at www.energyineducation.ie and the Passive Schools project. All schools built in accordance with the TGDs are capable of achieving an A3 Building Energy Rating.

The Department was a finalist in the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland Energy awards 2013, Legacy Category, which reflects and recognises the heritage and legacy of individuals and organisations that have been instrumental in changing energy management practices over the last 10 years.

1.8 Establishment of the Education and Training Boards (ETBs) and SOLAS

Major reform of the further education and training sector took place in 2013 with the establishment of the Education and Training Boards (ETBs) and SOLAS. The Education and Training Boards Act 2013 was enacted on 8th May and all of its provisions were commenced by 1st July 2013. The Act provides for the establishment of 16 new Education and Training Boards (ETBs) to replace the 33 Vocational Education Committees (VECs). The new legislation, which reforms and modernises the governance provisions and articulates the functions of the boards to better reflect the actual evolution over time of the role of VECs, replaces the 9 previous Vocational Education Acts with one piece of primary legislation. Following the enactment of the Further Education and Training Act 2013, SOLAS was established in October 2013 to provide strategic coordination and funding for the further education and training sector. Further information on this issue is available at paragraphs 4.2.

1.9 Reform of the Higher Education Sector

In May, the Department announced a major re-organisation of the higher education system providing for the consolidation of the institute of technology sector and colleges of education, the potential for merged institutes to become technological universities and the formation of regional clusters.

In July, the new performance framework for the higher education system was published. The System Performance Framework 2014-16 sets out the Government's national priorities, key system objectives and key performance indicators for the period 2014-16. A new process of strategic dialogue to agree performance compacts aligned with performance funding with each of the higher education institutions is now being rolled out by the Higher Education Authority as part of the overall framework.

1.9.1 Updating the Free Fees Initiative

The Free Fees Initiative was updated during the year to provide that non-EEA students who acquire EEA citizenship during the course of their studies may be entitled to free tuition fees for the remainder of their studies subject to meeting the criteria of the scheme. This was of particular benefit to migrant students who have resided in Ireland for many years and who were unable to obtain free tuition fees even after becoming naturalised in the State.

1.9.2 Student Grants Reform Programme

Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI), the awarding authority for student grant applications, implemented a number of new initiatives recommended by an independent review by Accenture. The initiatives include direct information and data sharing between SUSI and Government bodies and agencies, including the Revenue Commissioners, the Department of Social Protection, the General Register Office and the Central Applications Office. These links significantly reduced the number of documents required from students in processing their grant applications.

SUSI worked to ensure it delivered a better service and experience for students. Its application assessment process was further developed and a self-service online application tracker, which allows all students to personally identify the status of their application, was introduced.

1.10 Ireland's Presidency of the EU in Education and Training

In 2013 Ireland held the Presidency of the EU's Council of Ministers for the seventh time since its accession to the EU. The main overall theme of the education and training dimension of the Irish Presidency focussed on quality and equity.

During the Presidency, the Minister chaired two meetings of the EU's Council of Ministers and Departmental officials chaired ten meetings of the EU's Education Committee. One of the key achievements of the Presidency was the agreement brokered by the Department between the European Council, Parliament and Commission on Erasmus+: the EU's new €14.7 bn programme for Education, Training, Youth and Sport for 2014-2020. Other successes of the Irish Presidency included agreement by EU Ministers for Education on two sets of Council Conclusions which strengthen and improve EU co-operation in the field of education and training, and enhance the social dimension of higher education.

The Department also successfully chaired negotiations on behalf of the European Council with the European Parliament and Commission on two legislative files relating to the future funding and remit of the European Institute for Innovation and Technology. Political agreement on this issue was secured in June.

1.11 Residential Institutions Redress

The Residential Institutions Statutory Fund (RISF) was established in March 2013 to oversee the use of the cash contributions of up to €110 million pledged by the religious congregations to support the needs of some 15,000 survivors of residential institutional child abuse, via the provision of a range of approved services, including health and personal social services, education and housing services. During the year the Fund focussed on determining its approved services and the criteria which it will use to make decisions in respect of applications as well as the practical issues involved in becoming operational. By the end 2013, some €75m had been lodged in the special investment account for the Fund, including contributions of €73.4m and associated interest payments. The Education Finance Board was dissolved in March 2013 and its remaining functions were taken over by the RISF.

General Corporate Information and Data in 2013

This section of the Report provides general corporate data. Data in relation to specific initiatives can be found from paragraphs 3 to 7.9 of the Report. Key education statistics can be found on the statistics page of the Department's website via the following link:

www.education.ie/en/Publications/Statistics/

2.1 Our Mission

Our mission is to enable learners to achieve their full potential and contribute to Ireland's economic, social and cultural development.

2.2 Our High Level Goals

We aim to ensure that the Department and the wider education and training sector provide a high quality service which delivers value for money for the taxpayer. Our overarching goal is to improve the quality of teaching and learning at all levels of the education and training sector and improve learning outcomes over time. In support of this we have identified the following high level goals:

1. Provide a quality inclusive school and early years education system, with improved learning outcomes
2. Provide opportunities for up-skilling and re-skilling that meet the needs of individuals and the labour market
3. Provide high quality learning, research and innovation opportunities in the higher education sector
4. Plan and provide appropriate infrastructure for learning environments

2.3 Supporting the Parliamentary Process

Supporting the Parliamentary Process in 2013
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 3764 Parliamentary Questions were responded to.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Offices of the Minister and Ministers of State received in the region of 7,250 new representations in 2013 along with on-going correspondence related to existing case files.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 33 Topical Issues were replied to in the Dáil and 31 Adjournment Debate motions were replied to in the Seanad.

2.4 Information Services

Information Services in 2013
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Over 7,200 mail enquiries were received through info@education.gov.ie
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• There were in excess of 1.5m visits to our website www.education.ie. During the year, we developed our website further to include audio / video resources for schools and educationalists.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 328 requests under the Freedom of Information (FOI) Acts 1997 and 2003 were received. Over 300 decisions were made on FOI requests
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Press Office published 202 press releases and 30 speeches. 12 press conferences were held.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Department continued to use social media as a platform to communicate with external stakeholders and increased the Department's followers on Twitter from 1,000 in January 2013 to over 4,000 at the end of 2013

2.5 School Inspections

Further information on school inspections and the work of the Inspectorate can found at paragraph 3.9.

Table 1: Summary of all inspections and evaluations, 2013

Inspection/evaluation activity	2013
Inspections in primary schools	3,107
Inspections in post-primary schools and centres for education	898
Other inspections of provision for students and young people	80
Total inspections in schools and centres for education	4,085
Total school self-evaluation advisory visits	3,201

Table 2: Inspection and evaluations in primary schools, 2013

Inspection/evaluation activity	2013
Whole School Evaluation (WSE): Primary	223
Incidental inspections	429
Follow-Through inspections	126
Total school inspection visits	778
Inspections of newly qualified primary teachers	2,329
School self-evaluation advisory visits to schools	2,694

Table 3: Inspections in post-primary schools and centres for education, 2013

Inspection/evaluation activity	2013
WSE: Post-primary	-
WSE:Management Leadership and Learning (MLL): Post primary	71
Subject Inspections	404
Programme Inspections	13
Incidental inspections	284
Evaluation of Centres for Education (Youthreach)	4
DEIS evaluations	10
Follow-Through inspections	112
Total inspection visits	898
School self-evaluation advisory visits to post-primary schools	507

Table 4: Other inspections and evaluations of provision for students and young people

Inspection/evaluation activity	2013
Evaluation reports on Irish Gaeltacht (Summer/Easter) colleges (<i>Coláistí Gaeilge</i>)	40
North/South Joint evaluations of schools ^{‡‡} with ETI Inspectorate, Northern Ireland	10
Evaluation of schools for recognition purposes/assessment of education in places other than recognised schools	2
Evaluations of Early Childhood Care and Education settings / Early Start Project	6
Evaluation of Autistic Spectrum Disorder schools	1
Evaluation of Special schools attached to High Support Units, Special Care Units, and Detention Schools	9
Inspections of literacy summer camps for children	5
Inspections of <i>ampaísamhraidh</i> for children	5
Evaluation of Teagasc Colleges	2
Total other evaluation activity	80

^{‡‡} Joint inspections with Education and Training Inspectorate, Northern Ireland: 16 Dissolving Boundaries schools in 2011; 10 joint study research inspections on Literacy provision in 2013

2.6 Table of Prompt Payments in 2013

Prompt Payments ^[1] Summary January to December 2013			
Details	Number	Value (€)	Percentage (%) of total payments made (Number)
Number of payments made within 15 days	12,552	321,797,243	82.06%
Number of payments made within 16 days to 30 days	1,365	3,972,313	16.09%
Number of payments made in excess of 30 days	135	258,876	1.85%
Total payments made in 2013	14,052	326,028,432	100.00%
Total Disputed Invoices in 2013	9	197,381	

Source: Summary of 2013 Quarterly reports for the Department pursuant to Government Decision No.S29296 of 19th May 2009

^[1] Payments made on or before the date on which payment is due under the terms of a written contract, or where there is no written contract, or if the written contract does not specify a payment date, within 45 days of receipt of the invoice or delivery of the goods or services, whichever is the later.

Progress on our High Level Goals in 2013

Goal 1 – Provide a quality inclusive school and early years education system, with improved learning outcomes

The overall aim of the Department in its provision of supports to the school and early years' education system is to enable education providers to deliver quality outcomes for all learners in an inclusive environment. To achieve this goal the Department provides on-going teaching, financial, policy, legislative, regulatory and curricular supports, while also seeking to address educational disadvantage and special educational needs. The Inspectorate of the Department provides an assurance of quality and public accountability in the education system by carrying out inspections and evaluations in schools, while promoting best practice and school improvement through the provision of advice to, teachers, principals, boards of management in schools, policy makers in the Department and the wider education sector.

3.1 Supporting a High Quality Early Years Education System

The Department supports the quality of provision in the early years education sector through workforce development and the promotion of effective educational provision for children aged 0-6. The Early Years Education Policy Unit in the Department is co-located with the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (D/CYA) to ensure that policy developments in the early childhood sector are developed within an overall strategic policy framework for children.

In 2013, the Department finalised its work with the voluntary childcare organisations and the prevention and early intervention programmes on the field test of Síolta, the Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education. A final report on the development and implementation of the Síolta Quality Assurance Programme was published in December and is available on the Department's website.

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) showcased its work on the Aistear-in-Action toolkit with a national event in October. This toolkit helps to support practitioners in their implementation of the principles of Aistear, the curriculum framework for children aged 0-6.

In 2013, the early years sector came in for intense scrutiny with the broadcasting of a Prime Time programme on 28th May showing inappropriate practice in 3 creches. The response has been to re-focus Government attention on quality and build on the insights gained from the implementation of Síolta and the development of the Aistear-in-Action toolkit.

The Early Years Education (EYE) Policy Unit is participating in the European Commission Thematic Working Group on Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC), which was established in 2012, to develop a European Quality Framework for ECEC. Five priorities have been identified for a quality framework for ECEC: curriculum, workforce, access, monitoring and evaluation, and governance. In May 2013, the Unit with the D/CYA, co-hosted a peer learning activity in Dublin, with the theme of *Monitoring and Evaluation in Early Childhood Education*. A report on the proceedings is available.

The Department was represented on an expert advisory group established by the D/CYA to inform the development of an Early Years Strategy. Their report *Right from the Start* was published in October.

The EYE Policy Unit continued to administer the Early Start programme which is an early intervention programme for children at risk of educational disadvantage. 1,251 children availed of the programme in 2013.

3.2 Curriculum and Assessment in Schools

Throughout 2013, the Department continued its work with the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) and the State Examinations Commission (SEC) in relation to curricular development and prioritised the continued implementation of the National Strategy for Literacy and Numeracy, Project Maths and Junior Cycle Reform.

3.2.1 Junior Cycle Reform

The Framework for Junior Cycle was launched by the Minister in October 2012. In 2013 work continued on the development of the subject specification for English, the first subject to be rolled out in the new Junior Cycle. The final specification was published in the autumn.

Background papers on Irish, Science and Business Studies were released for consultation. The NCCA also continued work on a number of short courses for Junior Cycle including: Civic, Social and Political Education, Physical Education, Social, Personal and Health Education, Chinese, Programming and Coding, Caring for Animals (for children with special needs), Digital Media Literacy and Artistic Performance.

The NCCA continued to work closely with 48 network schools to develop exemplar material of students' work which can be used by teachers, parents and students to see the standard of work required.

Further information is available at www.juniorcycle.ie.

3.2.2 Improving our Literacy and Numeracy Skills

The implementation of *The National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy among Children and Young People 2011 to 2020*, which was published in July 2011, was on-going in 2013. Actions under the Literacy and Numeracy Strategy relate to parents and communities; teacher and early years education; curriculum; school leadership; students with additional needs and improving assessment. As such, the work achieved under the Strategy is cross-departmental in nature. Curricular work and some assessment developments are covered under this heading but significant developments have also taken place, for example, in relation to teacher education and school self-evaluation which are addressed elsewhere in this report.

In relation to assessment, the Department supported the Educational Research Centre (ERC) in providing a programme of national monitoring in primary schools in English reading, Irish reading and Mathematics, in both English and Irish medium schools. The ERC was also assisted in its participation in the Programme of International Student Assessment (PISA), the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) and Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS).

Standardised tests were conducted in 2nd, 4th and 6th classes for the second year in May/June 2013. The aggregated results of these tests were returned to the Department for analysis.

3.2.3 Project Maths

All five strands of Project Maths were rolled out to mainstream schools in September 2012. In June 2013, Leaving Certificate students sat examinations which covered strands 1-4 of the new curriculum, while at Junior Certificate, students were examined in strands 1-2. Due to both the

introduction of a new Leaving Certificate Project Maths syllabus, and also the provision of bonus points, there has been a 58% increase in the number of students presenting for the higher level mathematics paper over the past three years. Some 25.6% of the mathematics cohort presented for higher level in 2013, compared to 22.1% in 2012 and 15.8% in 2011.

Improvements are also being noted in the Junior Certificate, where 52% of mathematics students took the higher level paper in 2013, up from 48% in 2012 and 46% in 2011.

The target participation rate, as set out in the Literacy and Numeracy Strategy, is 30% by 2020.

Information in relation to continuing professional development for teachers of second level mathematics can be found Continuing Professional Development 3.10.5.

3.2.4 Evaluation of Project Maths

The NCCA commissioned the National Foundation for Educational Research to carry out research into the impact of Project Maths on student achievement, learning and motivation. The final report was published in 2013. It indicates that overall, the progress being made is in the right direction. Students are growing in confidence in their mathematical ability and real gains have been made in the levels of achievement in the areas of statistics and probability, which are now comparable with high international standards.

The evidence from this research is encouraging, as teachers acknowledge the need to change how they engage their students with mathematics and accept that the deeper understanding of mathematics acquired as a result will yield longer term benefits for students.

The full assessment report is available at www.ncca.ie.

3.2.5 Integrated Language Curriculum

As part of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy, in 2013 the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment continued work on the development of an integrated language curriculum for primary schools. While the focus of this curriculum will be on English and Irish, the integrated approach should help children to transfer skills acquired in one language to other languages and to establish a sound foundation for the learning of a foreign language in post-primary school. An integrated language curriculum should enable teachers to achieve learning efficiencies by explicitly drawing children's attention to similarities and differences between their languages.

3.2.6 Post-Primary Languages Initiative

The Post Primary Languages Initiative (PPLI) has worked to implement the policy of the Department of diversifying, enhancing and expanding the teaching of languages in second level schools. The PPLI website www.languagesinitiative.ie was further developed in 2013 to include resources for MFL teachers on MFL, Teaching and Learning, and Curriculum, Assessment and Policy. There is access to relevant material for teachers and learners of ALL languages on the website and on PPLI social media sites.

3.2.7 Teaching and Learning of Irish and through Irish in Schools

A number of measures, which will improve the teaching and learning of Irish or through Irish in our primary and post-primary schools, are currently being implemented. These include the implementation of improvements to the assessment of literacy in Irish as part of the Irish L1 curriculum in Irish-medium schools, as outlined in the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy. Revision of the contents of the Irish L2 curriculum for mainstream English schools using a "learning

outcomes” approach, specifying clearly what children will be expected to achieve at each stage of the primary cycle, was also carried out.

On-going support was provided by the Department to An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta (COGG) in providing teaching resources and support services for the teaching of Irish and through Irish, and also in carrying out its research.

A revised Leaving Certificate curriculum in Irish began in all schools in September 2010 for first examination in 2012. The revised programme provides for an increase in the proportion of marks available for oral assessment to 40%, and is aimed at promoting a significant shift in emphasis towards Irish as a spoken language, where students can communicate and interact in a spontaneous way, and where Irish is spoken every day in schools. In 2011 the percentage of pupils taking higher level Irish was 32.3%; this rose to 37.1% in 2012 and 38.2% in 2013.

The new integrated language curriculum at primary level will include learning outcomes specific to the language learning needs of pupils who learn through Irish, including those in Gaeltacht schools.

Work has also commenced on the development of a new specification for Irish at Junior Cycle. Consideration is also being given to the development of a specialised short course in Irish for use in Irish medium schools as part of the new Junior Cycle.

A comprehensive review of education provision in the Gaeltacht, which is currently underway, will take account of the particular challenges applicable to teaching through Irish in Gaeltacht schools and the planning provisions in the Gaeltacht Act 2013. The purpose of the review is to identify options for the delivery of education in Gaeltacht primary schools and post-primary schools of various linguistic profiles, and to clarify expectations and policy with regard to teaching through Irish in such schools. Arising from the review, it is expected that a range of policy options for the provision of education in Gaeltacht schools will be provided and that any additional supports required in the future will be identified.

3.2.8 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)

The fifth cycle of PISA took place in Ireland in March 2012. Mathematics was the main focus of the assessment, with reading, science and problem solving assessed as minor domains. Ireland, along with 32 other countries, also participated in a computer-based assessment of reading, mathematics and problem solving. In total, just over 5,000 15 year old students in 182 schools participated in the assessment in Ireland.

The PISA 2012 results for Ireland were analysed and published at the end of 2013 by the Educational Research Centre (ERC). The results show that in 2012, Ireland’s results were among the best in the OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) countries in reading and were significantly above the OECD average in mathematics and science. Significant improvements in all areas were displayed when compared to the last PISA results in 2009.

Ireland has seen most improvement in science where it is now ranked 9th out of 34 OECD countries and 15 out of 65 participating countries and regions; this is up five places since 2009. Ireland is placed 4th out of 34 OECD countries and 7th out of 65 participants for reading and 13th of the 34 OECD countries and 20th out of all 65 participants for mathematics.

All reports, studies, assessment tests produced by ERC are available on www.erc.ie.

3.2.9 Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS)

An edited volume of thematic reports on PIRLS and TIMSS in Ireland, *National Schools, international contexts: Beyond the PIRLS and TIMSS test results*, was published in June 2013. The reports are available from the Education Research Centre's website www.erc.ie. The issues they cover include comparative information on our education system, our teachers, our students, our curriculum and home-school interactions.

3.2.10 Supporting the Examinations Process

Throughout the year the Department continued to support the State Examinations Commission (SEC) which is the agency responsible for the assessment, accreditation and certification of the second-level examinations of the Irish state: the Junior Certificate and the Leaving Certificate.

Running the examinations is an immense logistical operation. In a typical year the examinations involve over 116,500 candidates in over 4,900 main examination centres and 10,000 special centres. Over 250 different test instruments, 90 curricular and 15 non-curricular subjects, over 6000 examiners, 3 million individual exam papers comprising over 34 million pages, and just under 2 million test items are involved in this process.

Although the SEC has a range of procedures in place to enhance reliability and to minimise error, it is an unfortunate fact that errors can occur on examination papers from time to time. On occasion, errors are not detected in advance and come to light during or after the sitting of the examination. There were a number of errors in the 2013 examinations.

Following discovery of the errors, the Department sought a report from the SEC and the SEC has undertaken to take the following steps:

- take a more formalised approach to strategic work-force planning which will include an assessment of the risks associated with the loss of subject-specific examination expertise
- use a risk based approach to review the personnel structures and protocols for paper preparation for each subject so as to ensure that they are fit for purpose in the context of staffing and other available resources
- analyse all post print errors, including the detected errors highlighted by the SEC on the List of Corrections, with a view to identifying patterns and underlying causes
- use the information arising from this review to identify where procedures and protocols might be strengthened and/or the training needs of staff e.g. in areas such as proof reading and version control.

3.3 Education for Sustainable Development

The Department held a public consultation on the development of a national strategy on Education for Sustainable Development in autumn 2013. This was followed by a roundtable discussion in November 2013. It is hoped to have the strategy finalised and published by the second quarter of 2014.

3.4 Policy Development to Support Schools

3.4.1 Action Plan on Bullying and the Development of Anti-Bullying Procedures

An Action Plan on Bullying was launched in January 2013 with a dedicated budget of €500,000 to support the implementation of actions to help prevent and tackle bullying in primary and post-primary level schools. The actions focus on support to schools, education and training, research and raising awareness.

New anti-bullying procedures for primary and post-primary schools were published in September 2013. The new procedures and the associated Department Circular 0045/2013 apply to all recognised primary and post-primary schools and to centres for education, as defined in the Education Act 1998, which are attended by pupils under the age of 18 years. School authorities and school personnel are required to adhere to these procedures in dealing with allegations and incidents of bullying.

The purpose of these procedures is to give direction and guidance to school authorities and school personnel in preventing and tackling school-based bullying behaviour among its pupils and in dealing with any negative impact within schools from bullying behaviour that occurs elsewhere.

It is expected that the development and adoption of an anti-bullying policy, which complies with the requirements of these procedures, will be completed by each school as early as possible in the 2013/14 school year but no later than the end of the second term of the 2013/14 school year.

A school's anti-bullying policy must be made available to school personnel and published on the school website. Where no website exists, the policy must be otherwise readily accessible to parents and pupils on request and provided to the Parents' Association where one exists.

The Board of Management of each school in developing its anti-bullying policy must formulate the policy in co-operation with both teaching and non-teaching school staff under the leadership of the Principal and in consultation with parents and pupils.

Funding was made available for over 100 anti-bullying training sessions for almost 3,300 parents. These were run jointly by the National Parents Council for primary and post-primary level.

Other activities included developing a programme of continuing professional development in relation to the Action Plan, support for Safer Internet Day 2013, support for the Stand Up! Awareness Week Against Homophobic and Transphobic Bullying in second level schools and commissioning of research on anti-bullying matters.

3.4.2 Patronage of Primary Schools

Following on from the pilot surveys issued in late 2012, at the beginning of the year the Department commenced the process of rolling out further surveys to parents of children aged 0-12 in 38 towns across Ireland inviting them to indicate their preferences for patronage of their local primary schools. The aim of the survey was to establish the level of demand from parents for diversity of school patronage in each of the towns and, where a preference for a wider choice of patron was indicated, to consult with existing patrons in relation to the development of a plan to transfer some schools to other patron bodies. The results of the surveys were published in April and revealed that 23 towns would see a change in patronage.

3.4.3 Applications for Patronage of New Post-Primary Schools

In May, the Minister sought applications for patronage of new post-primary schools in 2015 and 2016. Given that parental preference is the key issue in deciding on patronage, patrons were asked to provide evidence of parental demand when making an application for a new school. In addition,

the criteria used in deciding on patronage include how the proposed schools under the respective patrons should provide for extending or strengthening diversity of provision in the area, having regard to the views of parents. The New Schools Establishment Group, an independent advisory group, was tasked with advising the Minister on the patronage of the new schools following its consideration of a report prepared by the Department. The outcome of the process was announced in November 2013. In addition, in September 2013, the Minister announced the outcome of a separate patronage determination process for new primary schools due to open in 2014.

3.4.4 School Admission Processes

In September 2013, the Draft General Scheme for an Education (Admission to Schools) Bill, 2013 and the Draft Regulations on Content of Policy and Draft Regulations on Admission Process were published for discussion ahead of enacting legislation.

The aim in bringing forward these legislative proposals is to improve the admissions process and to ensure that the way schools decide on applications is structured, fair and transparent.

The publication of the draft General Scheme follows a public consultation process held in 2011 when the Minister launched a discussion paper on school enrolment. The document *Discussion Paper on a Regulatory Framework for School Enrolment* contained suggestions on how to make the process of enrolling in schools more open, equitable and consistent. The purpose of the paper was to lead and provoke debate on enrolment policies and practices. 90 submissions were received from the Education partners and other interested parties.

The draft General Scheme and draft regulations were referred to the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Education and Social Protection, to allow for a full public discussion, including inputs from parents and the education partners. The Joint Oireachtas Committee on Education and Social Protection invited written submissions from interested individuals or groups. The Oireachtas Committee's report will be carefully reflected upon before progressing to the next stage of legislation.

3.5 Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in Schools

3.5.1 ICT in Schools Programme

The ICT in Schools Programme is focused on the integration of ICT into teaching and learning and promotes the development of pupils' digital literacy. The programme addresses four broad areas which are: the provision of essential ICT infrastructure and networking within schools; the provision of access to broadband connectivity to schools; up-skilling teachers' ICT skills and integrating ICT within the curriculum; and providing curriculum relevant digital content and software. ICT strategies are pursued through the work of the Department and the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) Technology in Education, in collaboration with other agencies, support services and representative bodies as appropriate.

3.5.2 Digital Strategy for Schools

Work commenced in 2013 on the development of a new Digital Strategy for Schools. This Strategy will address the current position and what has happened to date; the objectives, priorities and challenges of the Department; and external activities and trends, including international developments. It will also address the new policy challenges and opportunities arising from major developments in curricular reform, digital publishing, digital content, cloud services, portable computing, student devices and broadband for schools. As part of the process, an online ICT census of schools was completed in 2013 and a public consultation process was launched. These, in addition to focus groups, will inform the Strategy development process. The Strategy is due for publication in 2014.

3.5.3 Electronic Portfolios

Under the EU Commission's *Creative Classrooms* call for proposals, the ICT Policy Unit in the Department is leading an international consortium in the development of a project proposal centred on piloting the operational use of eportfolios in Irish classrooms. The NCCA and SEC will formally participate in this project, alongside industry partners. 25 schools have been selected with the project to commence in spring 2014. An initial meeting to bring all the schools together took place in the Digital Hub on 10th December 2013.

3.5.4 Living Schools Lab

The Department is part of the EU Commission's Living Schools Lab, which is a two year project that includes 12 ministries of education. The main aim of the project is to create a sustainable, growing network of primary and secondary schools, based around regional clusters that showcase and share best practice and ways to successfully embed the use of technology in teaching and learning across the whole school. Seven schools from Ireland, 3 primary and 4 post primary, are participating in this project.

3.5.5 Broadband in Schools

3.5.5.1 100Mbps Broadband for Post-Primary Schools

320 post-primary schools have been connected with 100Mbit/s with a further 160 to be connected by the end of 2013. All remaining post primary schools will be connected by September 2014.

3.5.5.2 Schools Broadband Programme

Improvements in broadband at primary school level have been achieved following the award of new contracts from mini tender competitions run during 2013.

The daily average aggregate of schools' broadband network traffic increased from 1400Mbits/s in October 2012 to 2000Mbits/s in October 2013.

3.5.5.3 Scoilnet

In 2013, there were 1.8 million visits to www.scoilnet.ie, which is the national portal for ICT in education, and offers access to a growing repository of advice, information and evaluated and categorised web sources, software and multimedia resources.

3.6 Promoting Inclusiveness in Schools

3.6.1 Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS)

DEIS, the Action Plan for Educational Inclusion, is the Department's main policy initiative to address educational disadvantage. The aim of the Action Plan is to ensure that the educational needs of children and young people from disadvantaged communities are prioritised and effectively addressed. A key element of the Action Plan is the increased emphasis on planning at school and school cluster level, target-setting and measurement of progress and outcomes to ensure that the increased investment is matched by an improvement in educational outcomes for the children and young people concerned.

3.6.2 Ongoing Evaluation of DEIS

A key commitment under DEIS is an ongoing evaluation of the programme to ensure its successful implementation and the best possible approaches to measuring progress and outcomes at both local and national level with an emphasis on formative evaluation. The monitoring of change in achievement in reading and mathematics is a major component of the evaluations carried out by the Educational Research Centre (ERC). Building on 2007 and 2010 achievement data, further testing was conducted in 2013. Preliminary findings of this third round of longitudinal testing of reading and mathematics achievements of students in 120 DEIS Urban primary schools were

published in a bulletin report called *Changes in Pupil Achievement in Urban Primary Schools Between 2007 and 2013* in December 2013. This Report shows continuing improvements for pupils in DEIS schools in literacy and numeracy.

The main findings of the Report are: test scores at all grade levels where testing took place increased significantly between the collection of baseline data in 2007 and follow-up testing in 2010 with outcomes from the most recent round of testing in Spring of 2013 indicating that, not only were the initial gains maintained, they were built on between 2010 and 2013.; gains are particularly evident in the junior grades and in schools that have high levels of disadvantage; while there has been a striking reduction in low-scorers in both reading and mathematics, the percentage of high achievers in both subject areas has been maintained or increased; and levels of pupil absences have fallen from 10.8% in 2007 to 7.1% in 2013

Work on two further reports on the implementation of DEIS, in rural and urban primary schools and post-primary schools, commenced in 2013, and will be published by the ERC in 2014. Fieldwork for a complementary evaluation report, on target setting and planning in DEIS schools was commenced by the Department's Inspectorate in 2013 and the report will be published in 2014

In December 2013, it was announced that the Department, in conjunction with the ERC, will host a DEIS Research Seminar in spring 2014 at which DEIS programme practitioners, other educationalists and policy makers will have the opportunity to discuss the published learning from DEIS to date.

3.6.3 School Support Programme

A current particular focus is on the ongoing evaluation of the DEIS School Support Programme by the ERC and the Department's Inspectorate. In 2013, 852 DEIS schools, consisting of 195 Urban Primary Band 1, 141 Urban Primary Band 2, 322 Rural Primary and 194 post-primary schools, with an enrolment of almost 167,000 pupils, received additional resources according to their level of disadvantage under the DEIS School Support Programme.

The Home School Community Liaison Scheme (HSCL) and the School Completion Programme (SCP), which are key elements of the DEIS School Support Programme, are delivered by the Educational Welfare Service of the Child and Family Agency.

538 DEIS Urban Primary and DEIS post-primary schools have access to Home School Community Liaison, with 400 posts allocated for the deployment of teachers to the role of Co-ordinator.

There are 124 projects in the School Completion Programme spanning 26 counties, 223 post-primary and 468 primary schools, and specifically targeting approximately 36,000 children and young people.

€96.3 million was provided for DEIS resources in 2013.

3.6.4 Improving the Retention Rates for Students in Second Level Schools

The latest Report on Retention Rates in Post Primary Schools pertains to the retention rates of pupils who entered the first year of the Junior Cycle in 2007 and completed second level schooling no later than 2013.

The Report shows the following: the percentage of students who sit the Leaving Certificate overall has remained at greater than 90%; the average retention rate in DEIS schools increased from 80.1% for students who entered second level in 2006 to 80.4%, while the retention rate in non-DEIS schools dropped marginally from 92.7% to 92.6% for the same entry cohorts; the number of young men staying in secondary school has risen dramatically to 88.36% compared to 82.4% in the 2004 cohort; and the latest available data for all EU27 member states shows that in 2012 the proportion

of early school leavers in Ireland was 9.7% which compares to the EU-27 and EU-15 averages of 14% and 16% respectively. This ranks Ireland as joint twelfth in the list of EU member states.

3.6.5 Cooperation with the Irish Youth Justice Service

The Department assisted in claiming European Social Fund monies from the European Commission for Irish Youth Justice Service and Garda Youth Diversion Projects in 2013. These projects, which are focussed on the provision of IT and personal development skills, have been delivered through the Department of Justice and Equality and are targeted at young people who may have little engagement with the more established routes into education, training and employment.

3.7 Catering for Pupils with Special Educational Needs

The Department provides for a range of educational supports and services for children with special educational needs in mainstream and special schools including teachers, special needs assistants, assistive technology, specialist equipment, enhanced capitation and special transport arrangements.

The Department is committed to ensuring that all children with special educational needs can have access to an education appropriate to their needs, preferably in inclusive mainstream school settings through the primary and post-primary school network. Where children with special educational needs cannot be provided for in mainstream settings, the Department provides for specialised special class and special school places

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) is responsible for processing applications from schools for supports for children with special educational needs.

The National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) provides support to schools in identifying pupil strengths and needs and in planning for, and reviewing, interventions appropriate to those needs.

3.7.1 Targeted Supports provided for pupils with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream and Special Schools

As at 31st December 2013, there were 10,700 whole time equivalent learning support or resource teachers in mainstream primary and post-primary schools. In addition, over 1,100 teachers provided education to children attending special schools with reduced pupil teacher ratios ranging from 6:1 to 11: 1, depending on disability categorisation.

Children with special care needs are also supported by Special Needs Assistants. 10,745 whole time equivalent Special Needs Assistant posts are being provided for in the 2013/14 school year to cater for the care needs of children with special educational needs attending primary, post-primary and special schools.

Approximately 1,140 grants issued to primary and special schools in 2013 for the purchase of specialist equipment to assist children with special needs in the classroom. The type of equipment provided includes soundfield systems for children with hearing impairment or software and computer facilities for children with communicative disability.

103 additional classes for children with autism were approved in mainstream schools, 23 of which are early intervention classes. This brings the total number of special classes for children with autism in mainstream schools to 516 at the end of 2013.

3.7.2 Home Tuition Scheme

The Home Tuition Scheme provides funding to parents to provide education at home for children who, for a number of reasons such as chronic illness, are unable to attend school. The scheme was extended in recent years to facilitate tuition for children awaiting a suitable educational placement and to provide early intervention for pre-school children with autism. 1,249 pupils availed of home tuition during the 2012/13 school year.

3.7.3 July Education Programme

The July Education Programme provides for special classes to cater for children with autism who choose to extend their education services through the month of July. The Department also provides for a July Programme for pupils with a severe or profound general learning disability. Where school-based provision is not feasible, home-based provision may be grant aided through the Home Tuition Scheme.

There has been a steady increase in the number of schools offering the July Programme since it was introduced in 2001. 167 schools participated in the programme in 2013. Approximately 3,200 pupils availed of the home-based July Programme provision in 2013.

3.7.4 Development of Policy to Support Special Education

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) published policy advice in May 2013 on Supporting Children with Special Educational Needs in Schools. In its advice, the NCSE recommended that a new model should be developed for allocating special needs teaching resources to mainstream schools to ensure that such resources are targeted at the children who need them most.

The Minister subsequently requested the NCSE to establish a Working Group to develop a proposal for consideration for a new allocation model. The Working Group is expected to report its findings before the end of spring 2014.

The Minister has also requested the NCSE to provide policy advice on the educational provision for children with autism spectrum disorders. The NCSE has advised that the policy advice will be delivered in the spring of 2015 and will draw upon findings gathered from an extensive consultation process. The advice will also draw upon new research commissioned by the NCSE for this purpose as well as any other research which may be available and which the NCSE considers merits consideration. It is expected that the NCSE's final report will reflect the broadest possible range of views and provide recommendations which will assist the development of policy for future years.

3.7.5 Resource Teaching Allocations

In June 2013, the Minister authorised the NCSE to maintain the level of resource teaching allocations to be provided for students with special educational needs for the 2013/14 school year at 2012/13 levels. This decision resulted in the subsequent allocation of an additional 480 posts in October 2013 of which some 455 were allocated to schools before the end of the year. As a result, there are 5,745 resource teaching posts allocated to schools by the NCSE in 2013/14 to support pupils with low incidence special educational needs compared to 5,265 posts in 2012/13.

3.7.6 Increasing the Numbers of Special Needs Assistants

In December 2013, the Government agreed to increase the cap on Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) by 390 whole time equivalent posts, leading to an increase in the number of posts by 170 posts to 10,745 at the end of 2013, and by a further 220 posts to 10,965 at the end of 2014. These additional posts provided will enable the NCSE to continue to allocate support to children who need it in order that they may fully participate in and benefit from their education.

3.7.7 Middletown Centre for Autism Project

The Middletown Centre for Autism project is a jointly funded initiative between the Department of Education in Northern Ireland and the Department aimed at supporting the promotion of excellence in the development and harmonisation of education and allied services to children and young people with autistic spectrum disorders. The Centre commenced an agreed expansion of services in 2013.

See paragraph 3.10.6 for information relating to CPD to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs.

3.8 School Transport Scheme

One of the functions of the Department is to provide a safe, efficient and cost effective transport service for eligible children to and from school and to ensure the timely payment of grants to assist eligible families with school transportation costs in circumstances where it is not feasible or economic to provide school transport services.

Further changes to the School Transport Scheme arising from budgetary decisions, taking account of the value for money review of the Scheme, were fully implemented during the 2012/13 school year. These changes included the cessation of eligibility based on the closed school rule and the central school rule for all new children entering primary schools; the cessation of the catchment boundary system for determining eligibility for all new post-primary children and an increase in the primary transport charges for eligible children to €100 per primary child or a primary family maximum of €220. The charge for primary children availing of transport on a concessionary basis was reduced from €200 to €100.

Some 114,000 children, including 8,000 children with special educational needs, were transported safely to school in the 2012/13 school year. 82 million kilometres were travelled, covering 42 million journeys using some 6,000 routes. Over 2,000 families received in the region of €3.3 million in grant payments during 2013.

The outturn for the service amounted to €170.7 million which was over €2 million in excess of the allocation of €168.5 million.

3.9 Inspection and Quality Assurance in Schools

The Inspectorate of the Department contributes to the provision of a quality inclusive school education system through its annual programme of inspection in schools and centres for education, its development of new and improved models of inspection and its contribution to Department policy across a range of areas.

3.9.1 Annual Programme of Inspection in Schools and centres for education

The Inspectorate completed 4,085 inspections in 2013 (see tables 1 to 4 on pages 11 and 12). In addition to its evaluation work, the Inspectorate completed 3,201 school visits for the purpose of advising school staff about the implementation of school self-evaluation (SSE) of teaching and learning. The Inspectorate also provided online support to schools through its SSE Twitter account and website.

The Inspectorate commenced the development of a range of tools to support the quality assurance of its inspections and to improve its customer service. These tools include the development and trial of surveys of principals and teachers at primary level following Whole School Evaluation (WSE) and work was also commenced on a revision of the Inspectorate's Professional Code of Practice.

3.9.2 Development of New and Improved Models of Inspection

The Inspectorate aims to continually improve its coverage of schools and centres for education and the quality of its work. In 2013, it completed the development of a specialised model of inspections for schools at High Support Units (HSUs), Special Care Units (SCUs) and Children Detention Centres (CDCs). Inspection of educational provision in all nine of these schools was carried out in November and December 2013. Procedures were also agreed with other sections of the Department for the recognition of new special schools for autism and one school was evaluated for recognition purposes.

A revised Programme Evaluation model of inspection in the post-primary sector and a new model of whole-school evaluation - WSE-MLL (Whole-School Evaluation: Management, Leadership and Learning) in primary schools was implemented. Work also commenced on developing a model of curriculum evaluation in the primary sector.

In addition to visiting schools to support the implementation of school self-evaluation (SSE), work was also commenced on developing draft criteria for the SSE of leadership and management. In addition, revisions were made to the Inspectorate procedures for the probation of newly qualified teachers.

Consultation was also commenced with the education partners on the Follow-Through model of inspection, new evaluation instruments and processes were drafted and piloted in seven Early Start settings, and revised evaluation processes for Coláistí Gaeilge were implemented. Work also commenced on developing a model for evaluating primary and post-primary schools' provision for students' wellbeing.

3.9.3 Inspectorate Contribution to Policy and Curriculum Development

The Inspectorate contributed to the Teaching Council's development of a pilot project on probation called *Droichead* (see 3.10.2 also). In conjunction with the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, the Inspectorate has worked on drafting and finalising a progress report on the implementation of the 20 Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010-2030.

The Inspectorate contributes to curriculum reform on an ongoing basis and provided input into the revised Junior Cycle information booklet circulated to schools in early 2013, chaired the Junior Cycle Advisory Group and advised on the development of the completed Junior Cycle English syllabus, as well as providing advice to the NCCA on other subjects and short courses.

3.10 Teacher Education and Continuing Professional Development

3.10.1 Initial Teacher Education Programmes

The National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy among Children and Young People 2011-2020 launched in July 2011 aims to ensure that teachers and schools maintain a strong focus on literacy and numeracy skills, within a broad and balanced curriculum and sets out a wide-ranging programme of reforms in initial teacher education courses at primary and post-primary levels. In this regard, close consultation has taken place between the Department and the Teaching Council. The changes to teacher education, proposed in the draft Literacy and Numeracy Plan, were incorporated into the Teaching Council's Policy Paper on the Continuum of Teacher Education and Criteria and Guidelines for Programme Providers which were also published in 2011.

Under the Strategy, improvements are being made to initial teacher education courses including the setting of new higher entry requirements for teacher education courses and the reconfiguring of the content and duration of courses to ensure the development of teachers' skills in literacy and numeracy teaching.

The reconfigured and lengthened Bachelor of Education (primary) commenced in September 2012. In 2013, the extended and reconceptualised programmes of concurrent post-primary initial teacher education (ITE) commenced. The reconfigured and extended consecutive programmes of ITE at primary and post-primary levels are due to commence in 2014

During the year the Department engaged in continued efficient communication and administration with the Colleges of Education on a range of matters relevant to ITE, in particular, the Bachelor of Education Degree and the Postgraduate Diploma in Education for primary teaching.

3.10.2 National Induction Programme for Teachers (NIPT)

The main objective of the National Induction Programmes for Teachers is to support the professional development of newly qualified teachers at both primary and post-primary level by way of systemic support in their first year of teaching, thus laying the foundations for subsequent professional growth and development.

Droichead, a period of supported professional practice, is a central feature of a new model of induction and probation which is being piloted in a number of schools over the next two years. Following satisfactory completion of the *Droichead* process, newly qualified teachers will be confirmed by their fellow professionals as having met certain criteria and the Teaching Council will remove the *Droichead* condition from their registration. The Department and the Teaching Council have two steering committees which manage both programmes. While the Department funds both programmes, it only has responsibility for the management of the NIPT and the Teaching Council has responsibility for the *Droichead* programme, however, both have input into the programmes through the two steering committees.

3.10.3 Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST)

The main aim of the PDST is to ensure quality, consistent and cohesive continuing professional development (CPD) support in response to national priority areas and emerging local needs. The further integration of services on a cross-sectoral basis in 2013 led to the creation of a Health and Well-Being Team within the PDST. This team consolidated support for areas such as Social, Personal & Health Education (SPHE), child protection, physical education, anti-bullying and Relationship & Sexuality Education (RSE).

The PDST is charged with leading the provision of support for teachers in relation to the Department's Literacy and Numeracy Strategy, including School Self-Evaluation. These national priorities continued to dominate the landscape for the PDST in 2013.

3.10.4 Education Centre Network

There are 30 Education Centres nationwide, 21 of which are full-time and 9 part-time. Education Centres are key partners in the provision of teacher CPD. Under the remit of the Department they host national programmes of curriculum reform and offer support services and courses covering a large range of subjects relating to teaching and learning.

3.10.5 Continuing Professional Development – Mathematics

The national roll-out of CPD for teachers of second-level mathematics continued with workshops 8 and 9 delivered. In addition, a fourth suite of optional evening courses was offered, focussing on problem solving, new elements of the syllabus, methodology and student centred activities. The Project Maths Development Team held a Maths Conference for the first time in 2013 in the National University of Ireland, Maynooth. The conference included keynote speakers and showcased the work of the initial Project Maths schools in Lesson Study over the previous year. A

wide range of practical presentations were offered by teachers, disseminating teachers' strategies and real classroom experiences to over 300 participating teachers.

In 2013, the Department sanctioned a second intake of over 300 teachers to the post-graduate diploma for up-skilling of out-of-field teachers of mathematics. This is a blended learning, two year part-time programme, available to teachers nationwide and free of charge. In 2013, €1.7m was provided for the programme.

3.10.6 Continuing Professional Development to Meet Special Educational Needs

The need for additional continuous professional development (CPD) for teachers to enable them to meet the needs of students with special educational needs continues to be a high priority in the education system. Funding for the provision of places for teachers to pursue post-graduate qualifications in special education in third level institutions continued in 2013.

All teachers are also encouraged to seek assistance from the Special Education Support Service (SESS) and to pursue specialised CPD in relation to the learning and teaching of students with a wide range of special educational needs. In 2013, the SESS provided approximately 18,691 CPD teacher training places and a further 338 places were made available on post-graduate programmes in special education

3.10.7 Junior Cycle for Teachers

In 2013, a new and dedicated Junior Cycle CPD team was established called Junior Cycle for Teachers (JCT). Its function is to provide effective support to schools in the context of their implementation of the new Framework for Junior Cycle.

JCT will be offering a comprehensive and long-term national programme of CPD on a rolling basis throughout the implementation phases of A Framework for Junior Cycle. This programme commenced in October 2013 with workshops for school leaders and teachers of English. The programme will employ a variety of CPD delivery methods including in-school CPD, some of which will be teacher-led, along with off-site workshops. The website www.juniorycycle.ie is a collaboration between the NCCA and JCT and will be an integral part of the support structures, hosting information and materials aimed at supporting the implementation of the reformed Junior Cycle in schools."

3.10.8 Overall Statistics on CPD Units provided*

Programme	2013 CPD units provided*
NBSS	4,393
PDST	64,875
PMDT	11,765
SPHE	3,670
CPG	546
RSE	591
Guidance	623
Induction/Droichead	30,887
Junior Cycle	1,401
Summer Courses	30,278
SESS	18,691
Total	167,720

* The CPD units provided are the number of interactions a teacher support service has with teachers. Interactions range from a 2 hour session in a local education centre to a suite of sessions on a particular issue or in the case of college based events a full year post graduate course. The actual number of teachers is not recorded in these figures.

3.11 Employment Terms for Teachers and SNAs

In 2013 the Department regulated the employment terms and conditions governing teachers and Special Needs Assistants in recognised schools, developed policy in the area and monitored compliance in order to promote effective utilisation of human resources across the primary and post-primary schools sector. We also addressed the need for the effective operation of procedures to deal with instances of serious underperformance by teachers through the administration of disciplinary appeals procedures.

3.11.1 Enactment of Section 30 of the Teaching Council Act 2001 - 2013

In 2013, the Department actively supported the Teaching Council's role in regulating the teaching profession by further progressing the enactment of the Teaching Council Act 2001. During the year, the Department worked with ETB staff, the Teaching Council, teacher and school management representative bodies and teachers to prepare for the commencement of Section 30 of the Teaching Council Act in January 2014. We also worked with the Attorney General's Office in the preparation of the Regulations and Commencement Orders. Section 30 provides that teachers in recognised schools must be registered with the Teaching Council in order to be paid from public funds. This is an important development in the history of Irish education allowing for a fully regulated teaching profession. Such regulation is in the interest of providing the best possible education to our schoolchildren, and supporting the status of the teaching profession through fair and transparent regulation.

3.11.2 Teacher Payroll

The Department is responsible for the payment of salaries and pensions to teaching and non-teaching staff who are, or were, employed in primary, secondary and Community and Comprehensive schools.

In 2013, 95,500 serving and retired teaching and non-teaching staff were paid by the Department on behalf of the managerial authorities of schools on a fortnightly basis. This involved 2.4 million transactions. All staff on the payroll are paid by electronic fund transfer.

3.11.3 Review of Allowances and Premium Payments

Under the public service wide review of allowances and premium payments, qualification allowances and certain other premium payments were abolished. The Department contributed to the implementation of the public service-wide review as it applied to teachers through the publication of Circular 0008/2013 and the implementation of the allowance changes.

3.11.4 Policy Changes to Certain Leave Arrangements for Teachers and SNAs

The Department also implemented significant policy changes in relation to maternity and adoptive leave in lieu for teachers and special needs assistants as well as taking measures to harmonise sick leave referrals with those that apply in the civil service. Employers are now required to refer teachers and special needs assistants to the occupational health service after four weeks of sick leave. The above policy changes have resulted in reduced substitution costs for teachers and special needs assistants.

3.12 The National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)

During 2013, the NEPS undertook a review of its model of service to schools along with an examination of its processes, documentation, guidelines and service delivery mechanisms.

It also changed the way in which its service is provided to schools, assigning NEPS staff to all primary and post-primary schools, augmented, where necessary, with provision from the Scheme for the Commissioning of Psychological Assessments (SCPA). Previously psychological assessment services had been extended to schools either by the assignment of a NEPS psychologist or access to the SCPA. This new arrangement allows for a more homogenous service generally to mainstream schools. NEPS psychologists were therefore available to 98% of schools, or 99.5% of pupils, in 2013/14.

During the 2012/13 academic year, NEPS psychologists were involved in casework, which includes assessment and intervention, in relation to over 8,480 named students, and provided advice to teachers regarding interventions for approximately a further 25,000 unnamed students. Additionally, some 2,040 assessments were funded under the SCPA in 2013.

NEPS psychologists made recommendations on 5,045 additional pupils under the Reasonable Accommodation in Certificate Examinations scheme (RACE) on behalf of the State Examinations Commission and attended at 152 critical incidents in schools at the request of school authorities.

In 2013, NEPS completed a pilot project in 40 schools involving 800 5th class pupils in the Friends for Life Programme, which is designed to promote resilience and social emotional competence and reduce anxiety in pupils.

NEPS personnel produced and published *Effective Intervention for Struggling Readers*, which is a good practice guide for use in schools and part of the NEPS contribution to the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy.

NEPS facilitated the launch of *Well-Being in Post-Primary Schools Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention (2013)*, which was the work of an interdepartmental committee. NEPS psychologists are working collaboratively in supporting its implementation by schools.

Goal 2 – Provide opportunities for upskilling and reskilling that meet the needs of individuals and the labour market

4.1 Further Education and Training

In 2013, the Department continued to co-ordinate, fund and monitor the development of further education and training (FET) programmes for young people and adults to allow them to enhance their employment prospects and to enable them to achieve a higher level of qualification on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). Further Education and Training also provides second chance opportunities for marginalised people who may not have benefited from mainstream provision, including people with disabilities. Major reform of the sector currently underway will see the Department's role in this area change over time.

4.2 Major Reform of the Further Education and Training Sector 2013

2013 saw major reform of the further education and training sector with the establishment of the Education and Training Boards (ETBs) and SOLAS.

4.2.1 ETB/SOLAS Programme Board

The ETB/SOLAS Programme Board was established in May 2013 to actively support and enable the implementation of the overall reform programme for the ETB/SOLAS sector. This Programme Board is chaired by the Secretary General of the Department and its membership includes members of the Department's senior management team along with the General Secretary of Education and Training Boards Ireland, the Chief Executive of SOLAS and the Chief Executives of two ETBs.

The Programme Board is assisted by a Project Management Office (PMO) which supports the implementation of long-term strategic objectives as well as immediate, operational matters arising from the change agenda for both ETBs and SOLAS. During 2013, the PMO identified and progressed five strategic priorities for the sector which form part of this change management programme – ETB/SOLAS Governance, People, Shared Services Projects, Communications and Operations.

4.2.2 Establishment of the Education and Training Boards

The Education and Training Boards Act 2013 was passed in May 2013. The Act provides for the dissolution of Vocational Education Committees (VECs) and for the establishment of 16 Education and Training Boards (ETBs) through a process involving the merger of some of the 33 existing VECs.

Arising from the commencement of the Education and Training Boards Act 2013, the 16 ETBs were established on 1st July 2013. Upon establishment, the ETBs had responsibility for the delivery of primary, post-primary and further education in line with their predecessor VECs. The transfer of former FÁS training functions will then occur on a phased basis.

4.2.3 An tSeirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna - SOLAS

The Further Education and Training Act 2013 was enacted on 10 July 2013. The Act provides for the establishment of SOLAS, the dissolution of FÁS and the gradual transfer of the staff and property of the FÁS training division to the newly formed Education and Training Boards.

SOLAS was established on 27th October 2013, bringing about the dissolution of FÁS. SOLAS will work with the ETBs to support the development of appropriate further education and training programmes and curricula and the sourcing of further education and training interventions from the private, public and not for profit sector.

SOLAS training centres, together with relevant staff, located within the geographic areas of City of Dublin ETB, Dublin and Dun Laoghaire ETB, Cork ETB and Kerry ETB were to be transferred under the auspices of the relevant ETB with effect from 1 January 2014. The balance of SOLAS training centres will move to the relevant ETBs prior to the summer of 2014.

4.2.4 Further Education and Training Strategy and Service Plan

The legislation establishing SOLAS requires it to prepare a five year strategy for further education and training and annual service plans for the further education and training sector.

SOLAS commenced work on the development of these documents in 2013 with the full cooperation and participation of the Education and Training Boards (ETBs).

The strategy and annual service plans will provide a framework for the investment of over €800 million in a broad range of full time and part time further education and training programmes. These programmes range from labour market-focused provision designed to develop specific vocational skills in key economic areas and incorporating a growing work placement component to community part time programmes focused on personal development and social integration.

In 2013, almost 300,000 learners benefited from these programmes provided or funded through Education and Training Boards and former-FÁS Training Centres.

4.2.5 Review of the Irish Apprenticeship System

Under the Action Plan for Jobs initiative, a review of the Irish Apprenticeship system was completed in 2013 to determine whether the current model of apprenticeship should be retained, adapted or replaced, taking into account the needs of learners, employers, the economy and the need for cost effectiveness into the future.

The Apprenticeship Review Report, recommends an extension of the apprenticeships, which currently cover 26 occupations, to many other occupations including occupations where there are significant number of females employed.

The Report which was prepared by an independent review group, was presented to the Department in December 2013 and will be examined by relevant stakeholders to assess the next steps to be taken.

4.3 Adult Literacy and Numeracy Skills

The results of the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC), which were published in October 2013, showed an improvement in basic literacy skills in Ireland since the previous International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) results were published in 1997. However, Irish participants scored below the survey average in numeracy and performed at the survey average in terms of its proportion of participants scoring at the lower levels in problem solving.

In 2013, the Department published a report of a review of the Adult Literacy Service. The Report addressed the level and nature of provision recommending more intensive options, group tuition, numeracy tuition, family literacy, and distance and blended learning options. There are also recommendations addressing areas such as assessment of learners, availability of accredited options, identifying learners including the unemployed, the integration of literacy in other programmes and the training of staff. The Department began the process of addressing the recommendations contained in the Report with the revision of the Adult Literacy Operational Guidelines which were re-circulated to providers before the year end. Their implementation will continue through the Further Education and Training Strategy, which is being developed by SOLAS.

In 2013, funding of approximately €30 million was provided for the Adult Literacy Service and a further €2.8 million was provided from the National Training Fund for the Skills for Work Programme which aims to improve the literacy and numeracy skills of employees.

4.4 Action Plan for Jobs and Pathways to Work

4.4.1 Skills Plus

As part of the Government's Action Plan for Jobs and Pathways to Work, the Department is continuing to develop high quality education and training to support unemployed people to return to employment by accessing re-skilling opportunities appropriate to their needs.

Launched in 2013, the new 'Skills Plus' brand which has been developed by a number of Government Departments and relevant agencies represents a new coordinated approach to presenting the range of enterprise-focused targeted education and training programmes available to jobseekers.

Skills Plus includes ICT conversion courses, Springboard, Momentum, the ICT conversion programmes and Skillnets Jobseeker initiatives. JobBridge and JobsPlus are also being included in the Skills Plus brand.

4.4.2 Springboard

The Springboard programme provides part-time higher education places for unemployed people in areas of identified skills needs. During 2013, 5,200 participants were supported on Springboard courses. The total spend in respect of Springboard in 2013 was €19.4m.

A second stage evaluation report on Springboard was published in February 2013. It shows that 30% of Springboard participants were back in work within 6 weeks of completing a Springboard course and that 40% were back in work within 6 months of completion.

4.4.3 ICT Skills Graduate Conversion Programme

The ICT Action Plan, which was published in January 2012, was developed as a direct response to specific ICT skills needs. A key measure in the Plan was the immediate roll out of level 8 ICT skills conversion programmes. A second phase of the ICT skills conversion programmes commenced in 2013 with 887 people participating on programmes. The total spend in respect of the ICT Skills Programme in 2013 was €3.5m.

Progress in meeting the key targets in the 2012 ICT Plan/Disruptive Reform is ahead of schedule. A doubling of core level 8 ICT graduate output is now expected to be achieved by 2015 instead of 2018, while the implementation of key reforms at primary and second level, allied to the introduction of bonus points for maths, is building up the quality and mathematical proficiency of students entering third level.

4.4.4 MOMENTUM

MOMENTUM, a scheme for education and training interventions, which is part of the Government's Action Plan for Jobs initiative, was rolled out by the Department. MOMENTUM supports the provision of free education and training projects to allow up to 6,500 long term jobseekers to gain skills and to access work opportunities in identified growing sectors.

4.4.5 Pathways to Work

To complement the Action Plan for Jobs, the Government also launched the Pathways to Work Initiative, which provides for a targeted approach to help and support unemployed individuals, especially the long term unemployed and young people, to stay close to the labour market. The Pathways to Work approach will ensure regular and ongoing engagement with the unemployed to provide opportunities for work, education and training.

In 2013 the Department committed to approximately 51,000 places for long term unemployed (LTU) participants across the range of its further and higher education and training provision. The estimated LTU participation in 2013 was 59,530 or 27% of total starters. This represents 115% of the 2013 target. However, it should be noted that this was driven largely by higher than anticipated participation in part-time courses.

4.5 Enterprise Engagement Forum

Employers have long been involved in national structures in areas such as examining skill needs, developing qualifications and managing the apprenticeship programme. More recently, the Department has been discussing issues and opportunities with employers through our Enterprise Engagement Forum. Employers have played a key role in the review of apprenticeship and are contributing to the development of the Further Education and Training Strategy.

4.6 Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan

Officials from the Department have been closely involved in the development of the draft Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan through the work of an interdepartmental committee. The Plan involves an incremental approach towards delivering the guarantee of a quality offer of employment or training within four months of a person aged 15-24 becoming unemployed.

The nexus of the approach is the engagement the Department of Social Protection will have with young people through their Intreo offices. The education and training system will support the Plan by providing quality training and education and work placement opportunities in education and training programmes in conjunction with the interaction of SOLAS and the ETBs with Intreo offices.

4.7 European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGF)

The European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGF) is an EU co-financed funding mechanism launched in 2007 to help EU Member States to provide a personalized package of re-training and up-skilling services to workers made redundant due to the effects of globalisation and shifting global trade patterns. The Fund had a budget of up to €500 million a year for the period 2007-2013. The EGF only funds active labour market interventions and save for exceptional circumstances, only provides support where there has been a minimum of 500 + redundancies within a defined time period.

The Talk Talk EGF Programme provides for a range of active labour market interventions over the period September 2011 to February 2014 for 585 workers affected by redundancies at the Talk Talk facility in Waterford. The interventions being delivered to redundant workers under the Talk Talk EGF Programme include guidance and career planning, training courses, further and higher education programmes, internships and enterprise supports.

At the end of November 2013, 414 (70.8%) of the eligible redundant workers under the Talk Talk EGF programmes, had been provided with 2,005 separate interventions. Some 15.6% were actively participating in a training or education programme. Between February 2012 and the end of November 2013, the proportion with a status of employed rose from 27.7% to 49.4%.

During the year verifications were carried out by the Department on the EGF Talk Talk claims to confirm compliance with EU regulations.

During the Irish Presidency of the European Council, the EGF Managing Authority had significant input in securing a Council general approach on stalled negotiations on the EGF Regulation in June 2013. This progression ultimately led to the approval of a new regulation and continuance of the €1 billion fund for the period 2014 – 2020.

4.8 European Social Fund

The Department assisted in the claiming of €24.1 million of European Social Fund (ESF) monies from the European Commission during 2013. These ESF monies are co-financing the cost of eligible ESF activities delivered across various Government Departments. The ESF activities are mainly investments in human capital through education and training programmes.

The total amount of ESF aid to be claimed for the Department's five measures during the programme period from 2007 to 2013 is approximately €156.8 million.

During the year, claims for the drawdown of financial assistance from the ESF were submitted to the ESF Managing Authority by the relevant deadlines. The Department also facilitated EU Commission and ESF Audit Authority visits and audits, and followed-up on any issues raised at the audits.

Where monies have been claimed for undergraduate skills activities, these activities have been delivered by third level education providers by increasing the number of students enrolled on courses in the ICT, engineering and science disciplines in order to address the shortages of skilled graduates identified by the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (EGFSN) and other reports.

Where monies have been claimed for further education and training programmes, these have been delivered through further education and training providers. The aim of these programmes is the development of the BMW and S&E Regional Operational Programmes

4.9 EU Cohesion Policy

The EU's 2014-2020 Cohesion Policy aims to address the current economic downturn and the challenge of an integrated cohesion policy. The strategic direction for the future policy is framed by the EU 2020 Strategy and the EU Budget. Ireland supports the goals of the EU 2020 Strategy. The EU Cohesion Policy will be a key tool in the achievement of these goals. Interventions must be focused on creating employment, research and innovation, education, combating poverty and climate change and energy. During the Irish Presidency of the European Council in the first half of 2013, the Department played a significant role in developing the 2014-2020 Cohesion Policy Regulations package and specifically in the area of the European Social Fund Regulation. This was mainly achieved through presenting and protecting the European Council positions during trilogies negotiations between the European Commission, European Parliament and European Council. The Cohesion Policy Regulations package was finalised and published in late 2013.

Goal 3 – Provide high quality learning, research and innovation opportunities in the higher education sector

Higher Education has an important role in supporting personal opportunity, social, civic and cultural development. It is also recognised as an increasingly important element of our national infrastructure for supporting enterprise development, innovation and economic growth. Within that context, supporting quality teaching and learning, research and innovation in higher education, and enhancing the capacity of the sector to respond to the changing needs of learners, the economy and society are a priority for the Department. The Department aims to promote access to higher education, particularly for under-represented groups, by providing flexible learning opportunities. Our long term objectives are to increase the levels of overall educational attainment in the workforce and to increase the participation of under-represented groups in higher education.

5.1 The National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030

The National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 was launched in 2011 with the overall objective of bringing a more coherent and coordinated approach to the development of the higher education sector. Progress continued during 2013 in implementing the recommendations in the Strategy. Detailed progress reports on the implementation of the recommendations of the Strategy were published on the Department's website during the year.

In May 2013, the Minister announced a major re-organisation of the higher education system which will include the consolidation of the institute of technology sector and colleges of education, the potential for merging institutes of technology to apply to become technological universities and the formation of regional clusters of higher education providers.

5.2 Higher Education System Performance Framework 2014-2016

In July, the new Higher Education System Performance Framework was published. This Framework sets out the Government's national priorities, key system objectives and key performance indicators for the period 2014-16. A new process of strategic dialogue to agree performance compacts, aligned with performance funding with each of the higher education institutions, is now being rolled out by the HEA as part of the overall Framework.

5.3 National Student Survey

A full national pilot of a student survey, involving all universities, institutes of technology and five colleges of education, was undertaken in March/April 2013. It was the first national survey of student engagement and the first survey of its kind in Europe. A report on the implementation of the pilot survey was published in December 2013.

5.4 Transitions Reform Steering Group

In 2013, the Department brought together key education partners to address some of the issues that have been identified in relation to the transition of school leavers into their first year undergraduate experience. A Transitions Reform Steering Group, chaired by the Department and with high level membership from key agencies at 2nd and 3rd level and also from the university and institute of technology sector, was established. The areas being addressed by the Group, its progress to date and future work are outlined in a paper published during 2013 called *Supporting a Better Transition from Second Level to Higher Education - Key Directions and Next Steps*.

5.5 Promoting Equity of Access to Higher Education

The Department continued to provide targeted supports to facilitate greater levels of educational participation by under-represented groups in 2013. The high level objective is to support students with a disability, mature students and those from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds to access opportunities to progress to higher education.

The Third Level Access Measure, managed on behalf of the Department by the Higher Education Authority, comprises two sub-priorities: the Student Assistance Fund and the Fund for Students with Disabilities.

The Student Assistance Fund is administered on a local basis by participating higher education institutions and targets those students most in need. It provides institutions with additional resources to support full-time students who experience circumstances of hardship.

The Fund for Students with Disabilities provides funding to both further and higher education institutions for the provision of services and supports to full-time students with serious sensory, physical and/or communicative disabilities. The Fund aims to support students in participating fully in their academic programmes and to ensure that they are not disadvantaged by reason of a disability.

5.5.1 Increased Participation Rates among Under-Represented Groups

Ireland's National Access Plan for 2008-2013 has concluded. The Plan included a number of targets to increase participation by under-represented groups in higher education.

A final review of the 2008-2013 plan indicates that the target of 61% for overall participation in higher education by 2013 was exceeded with the achievement of a participation rate of 70%. This figure includes both recent school-leavers and those who returned later as mature students.

Since 2009, there has been a concerted policy focus on increasing the number of part-time places in higher education. The success of this policy can be seen in the increase in part-time participation rates which have grown from 7% to 16% of undergraduates by 2012-13.

There was also considerable success in increasing the levels of participation by students with disabilities in higher education, as demonstrated by the numbers supported through the Fund for Students with Disabilities. For example, there are now more than double the number of students who are visually impaired or have physical disabilities in higher education than there were at the outset of the last plan and there are more than treble the number of students with physical, sensory and multiple disabilities combined.

A new national access plan is being finalised to come into effect in 2014 and this will include new targets to build on the progress to date in increasing participation by groups who continue to be under-represented in higher education

5.6 Student Grants

The Department provides funding to the City of Dublin Education & Training Board for the administration of student grants by Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI). In 2013, a Management Framework Agreement was signed by the City of Dublin Education and Training Board and the Department, and this now forms the basis of the system's operation and ongoing oversight. The Management Framework Agreement includes specific performance metrics and targets which now underpin the monitoring and evaluation of the system.

5.6.1 Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI)

An external review of SUSI's business processes was undertaken to inform improvements in the system for the 2013/14 academic year. Many of the recommendations of the review were implemented by SUSI in 2013, including significant improvements to its systems and procedures to streamline the grant application, processing and payment processes. Key among these changes were the information-sharing arrangements implemented with Government departments and agencies to reduce the amount of documentation sought from applicants.

SUSI implemented data sharing links with Government bodies and agencies such as the Revenue Commissioners, the Department of Social Protection, the General Register Office and the Central Applications Office in 2013. These and other changes implemented by SUSI led to the speedier processing of grant applications and payment of awarded grants and a much improved experience for applicants in the second year of its operation.

5.6.2 Student Grants Appeals Board

In 2013, the Student Grants Appeals Board sat on 32 occasions. SUSI came under the remit of the Office of the Ombudsman on 1st May, 2013. The Ombudsman can examine complaints in relation to the administrative actions of SUSI.

5.7 European University Institute Scholarships

The European University Institute (EUI) is a postgraduate research institution established by the Member States of the European Union and based in Florence. The Department funds postgraduate scholarships for a number of Irish students in the EUI each year. Ireland assumed the presidency of the High Council, the governing board of the EUI in March 2013 and will complete its one-year term in March 2014. The Department is also chairing the Budget and Finance Committee for the duration of Ireland's presidency of the Institute.

5.8 Expenditure on Equity of Access to Higher Education Initiatives in 2013

Expenditure in 2013 on equity of access to higher education was as follows:

Schemes	No. of beneficiaries (2012/13 academic year)	Expenditure in 2013 Financial Year
Student Grant Schemes	79,251	€336,888,554.22
Third Level Access Schemes	24,597	€16,200,000.00
Scholarships/Bursaries	373	€1,943,214.65

In 2013, the maximum standard rate of maintenance grant was €3, 025. Students qualifying for the special rate of grant received a maximum of €5,915.

Fund	Number of Students who Benefited from, the Fund in 2012/13 Academic Year
The Fund for Students with Disabilities	7,920
The Student Assistance Fund	16,476
Scholarships/Bursaries	241 (scholarships), 114 (bursaries)

5.9 Higher Education Research and Funding Policy

The Department allocates recurrent funding to the Higher Education Authority (HEA) for direct disbursement to the Universities, Institutes of Technology (IoTs) and designated colleges. The Department also funds a small number of higher education institutions directly.

Recurrent funding to the Universities, IoTs and other HEA designated institutions amounted to nearly €1.036 billion in 2013. This funding includes the grant in lieu of the cost of undergraduate tuition fees which, overall to the sector, amounted to some €326.3 million in the 2012/13 academic year covering some 129,000 full-time students.

The Department also provides support for the development of research capabilities across the broad range of disciplines in third level institutions through the funding of human capital – generally PhD students and early-stage postdoctoral researchers - by the Irish Research Council. The provision also funds underpinning e-infrastructure for the research system. Nearly €38 million was provided in 2013.

During the year, the HEA continued a study on the future funding policy for higher education. This study was initiated at the request of the Minister and an initial report has been published. This study is required to prepare for a longer term approach to a system that can be maintained through a sustainable funding base which will be able to address the continual expansion of the sector while protecting the quality of education. The final report, when published, will help inform decision-making as to the future funding of the sector.

5.10 Quality and Qualifications Ireland

Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) was established in late 2012 as a new integrated agency replacing the Further Education and Training Awards Council, the Higher Education and Training Awards Council and the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland, and incorporating the functions of the Irish Universities Quality Board. QQI is responsible for the external quality assurance of further and higher education and training. The agency validates programmes and makes awards for certain providers in these sectors, and is responsible for the maintenance, development and review of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).

Since its establishment, QQI has been progressing the development of its qualifications and quality assurance services. The Department engaged with QQI on developing its policies, criteria and services in its first year of operation and has also engaged with the agency on the introduction of a Service Level Agreement between it and the Department.

The expenditure for the QQI in 2013 was €6,416,00 which constituted a saving of €1,000,000.

As part of the Irish Presidency of the EU, the Department also lead on the modernisation of Directive 2005/36 on the recognition of professional qualifications.

5.11 Review of Ireland's International Education Strategy

The Action Plan for Jobs, 2013, contained a commitment that the Department would conduct a short, focused review of *Investing in Global Relationships: Ireland's International Education Strategy 2010-2015*, which was published in November 2010.

To inform the review, the Department conducted a public consultation process, which involved engagement with Government Departments and agencies, and resulted in the receipt of submissions from a number of stakeholders. The review will result in a new Government action plan for the promotion of international education in Ireland.

5.12 North South Cooperation

The Department co-ordinates and develops co-operation and common action in education between both parts of the island of Ireland and with relevant institutions in the US and EU, in the context of the *Good Friday Agreement*. The Department takes forward this co-operation through the North South Ministerial Council (NSMC) and co-ordinates and develops, within that framework, common policies in designated areas of co-operation.

In 2013, enhanced and structured high-level official engagement continued between the Department and the Department of Education (DE) and the Department of Employment and Learning (DEL) in Northern Ireland.

The Department and the DE continued to support all-island initiatives to promote literacy and numeracy in 2013. This included Maths Week which took place in October and a Children's Books Ireland Programme aimed at promoting the engagement of young teenagers aged 12-15 in reading.

The table below sets out the number of participants in North/South school and youth-based educational exchange projects funded by the Department in 2013. The figures provided reflect the total numbers of schools, youth groups, teachers, trainers, students and young people from Ireland and Northern Ireland that were involved in the relevant projects.

Participants	2013
Total No. of Schools	1,788
Total No. of Youth Groups	34
Total No. of Teachers/Trainers	2,368
Total No. of Students	191,513
Total No. of Young People	8,251
No. of 3 rd Level Institutions	57

Total expenditure by the Department in supporting these activities in 2013 amounted to €938,191.

5.13 Lifelong Learning Programme 2007-2013

In keeping with its role in supporting and supplementing the actions of the Member States in the area of education and training, the European Commission adopted a range of programmes supporting cross-border mobility, networking and sharing of best practice. The European Commission integrated its various educational and training initiatives under a single umbrella programme called the *Lifelong Learning Programme 2007-2013*.

With a budget of nearly €7 billion for 2007 to 2013, this programme enabled individuals at all stages of their lives to pursue learning opportunities across Europe. It consisted of four sub-programmes: Erasmus, Comenius, Leonardo DaVinci and Grundtvig, as well as transversal programmes covering inter-sectoral themes such as ICT and languages.

Between 2007 and 2013, Ireland received over €80 million from the Lifelong Learning Programme, which allowed some 18,500 Irish third-level students and lecturing staff to participate in Erasmus educational exchanges. This EU funding also provided opportunities for some 2,400 Irish trainees to benefit from European work placements, for some 1,500 workers to up-skill during placements in European companies, for some 1,700 vocational education and training professionals to

exchange best practice and around 785 schools and 158 adult education organisations to participate in various European partnerships. In addition to these, some 672 adult educators and senior professionals in general education and vocational education and training participate in the Grundtvig and Study Visits programmes, and over 1,125 teachers and future teachers will be given the opportunity to participate in the Comenius programme. The total funding allocated to Ireland under the Programme in 2013 was €13.83m.

Under the Programme, the European Commission provided funding to beneficiaries and project promoters and partners. This funding was administered by the national agencies in the member states. In Ireland, the administering agencies are Léargas and the Higher Education Authority. The Department, and the Department of Health and Children, are the national authorities, or guarantors, that oversee the administration of the programme by the agencies. Both Departments are represented on the Board of Directors of Léargas. Léargas is a client agency of the Department in such matters as the appointment of the board and grant and reporting arrangements. The Department interfaced with Léargas on the various initiatives and directives drawn for non-commercial State agencies generally, as well as on the Lifelong Learning Programme.

Lifelong Learning Programme Funding	
Erasmus expenditure	€5,988,099.88
Comenius expenditure	€1,871,008
Leonardo daVinci expenditure	€3,932,125
Grundtvig expenditure	€655,391
Study Visits expenditure	€86,319
Operational funding for Leargas	€722,400
Operational funding for HEA	€180,000

5.14 Promoting Ireland Internationally as a Centre of Excellence in Education and Training

With the aim of attracting top international students from priority and emerging markets, the **Government of Ireland Scholarships** scheme was launched. Under the scheme, successful recipients will have all fees and registration charges waived and also receive €10,000 to cover living expenses for one year of study in Ireland.

The continued development and promotion of the **Education in Ireland** brand in priority markets, including the US, China, India, Brazil and the Gulf, involved in-market activities, research activity, web-based marketing and the development of targeted social media activities. Outward Ministerial missions were led to priority countries including China, Saudi Arabia and Brazil.

Actions to develop international education links and inter-governmental contacts included participation at Secretary General level in the Ireland –China Joint Working Group on Education, the hosting of twelve incoming international delegation visits and the conclusion of international education agreements with Japan and Korea.

5.15 Ireland's Presidency of the EU in Education and Training

Ireland's 2013 Presidency of the EU developed EU policy across a range of areas. Notable achievements in the area of education and training included:

- Political agreement between the European Council, Parliament and Commission on Erasmus+, the new EU programme for Education, Training, Youth, and Sport for 2014-2020, worth approximately €14.7 billion.
- Political agreement among Ministers for Education on two sets of Council Conclusions relating to:
 - Investment in education and training in response to the European Commission Communication on Rethinking Education; and
 - The social dimension of higher education

The Presidency included a busy schedule of meetings and events at Ministerial, Directors-General, and other official levels. These meetings took place in Brussels and Dublin. A number of conferences and other associated events, which tackled a range of educational issues from early childhood education and care, through to further education and training, were also held throughout the first part of 2013 as part of the Presidency programme

Goal 4 – Plan and provide appropriate infrastructure for learning environments

The Department aims to provide appropriate infrastructure for learning environments so that all learners have access to a modern learning environment. A primary focus of the Department's is the provision of accommodation to meet demand for school places in areas where enrolments are rising.

6.1 Meeting School Accommodation Needs

In 2013, a total of €361m was spent on schools' infrastructure. Outputs from this investment include 44 large-scale projects that were completed; 29 in the primary school sector and 15 in the post-primary school sector. A total of 7,840 permanent school places, of which 5,684 were additional permanent places, were provided in 18 new primary schools and 2,352 additional permanent places were provided in 11 existing primary schools.

In the post-primary school sector, 7 new schools and 8 large scale extension or refurbishment projects were completed in 2013. These projects delivered a total of 3,575 permanent school places, of which 2,835 were additional permanent places, as well as providing enhanced facilities for 5,840 pupils.

The number of smaller scale projects approved for delivery by schools amounted to 876 and consisted primarily of the Additional Accommodation Scheme, the Prefab Replacement Initiative and approvals arising from Emergency Works applications. Within the smaller scale projects cohort, the Additional Accommodation Scheme and the Prefab Replacement Initiative realised a total of 13,658 permanent school places.

12 sites were acquired in 2013. Sites acquired in 2013 will facilitate the provision of school accommodation for 12 primary schools and 2 post-primary schools.

6.2 Diverse Methodologies for the Construction of Major Projects

The Department's five year plan includes alternative methods of delivering projects including through the public private partnership process. Agencies such as the Office of Public Works, the Education and Training Boards and the National Development Finance Agency, as well as a number of Local Authorities, are all assisting with the delivery of 69 major school projects.

6.3 Third Level Capital Projects

The total spend on higher education capital projects in 2013 was almost €69m. Large scale projects that benefitted from this funding include the library at the National University of Ireland, Maynooth; the National Film School at Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology; a science laboratory at Letterkenny Institute of Technology; the Sutherland School of Law at University College Dublin; the Science Centre at University College Dublin; the Physical Education and Sports Science Building at the University of Limerick; and the Graduate Medical School, also at Limerick.

Financial support was also provided for the commencement of site clearance works at the Grangegorman site for the planned re-location of the Dublin Institute of Technology.

6.4 Audit, Appraisal and Asset Management Systems

The Online Inventory of School Accommodation (IOS) is being compiled by schools using the Esinet Portal as part of the overhaul of the central database of school accommodation. To date 85% of schools have completed the inventory data.

An inventory of all primary and post-primary education infrastructure and related community assets was undertaken on a pilot basis in five areas of the country during 2012. A project team has been appointed to progress the development of inventory data for the rest of the country.

A range of Frameworks for consultancy appointments are in operation for larger, complex and urgent projects

In 2013, the Department carried out over 100 inspections on schools that had received devolved funding and completed their projects by the end of 2012 to see if works were carried out in accordance with Department guidelines.

6.5 Enhancing Communication and Coordination with External Stakeholders to Improve Building and Planning Processes

As referred to at 6.2, the Department has made arrangements with external stakeholders in relation to the diversification of the delivery of projects including putting arrangements in place with ETBs and two County Councils. The Online Inventory of School Accommodation will also assist in improving coordination and communication with external agencies.

6.5.1 On-Line Application System for the Summer Works Scheme

An on-line system whereby schools can submit applications for funding under the Summer Works Scheme was introduced in 2013. The on-line application system has brought significant enhancements to the application process generally and removed the need for paper based applications. Over 1,600 applications were submitted by schools using this facility.

6.5.2 Development of a Memorandum of Understanding with Local Authorities

In 2013, a series of meetings with senior management in local authorities were held to progress the implementation of a Memorandum of Understanding. The Department contacted a number of local authorities outlining the Department's site requirements and formally requested their assistance. Department officials are working with officials across the local authority sector to progress the acquisition of sites in relevant areas. It is anticipated that the interactions that develop from the implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding will provide the Department with greater certainty in relation to planning outcomes associated with sites.

6.5.3 Publication of Project Information on the Department's Website

Lists of projects approved for delivery are published on the Department's website on a monthly basis. In the case of major projects, updates are provided on the progress through the various stages of delivery. In the case of smaller devolved projects information is published on a weekly basis listing the name of the school, the type of project and dates of approval.

6.6 Energy Efficiency in Schools

As referred to at 1.7 in the Review of the Year, the Department was a finalist in the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland Energy awards 2013, Legacy Category, which reflects and recognises the heritage and legacy of individuals and organisations that have been instrumental in changing energy management practices over the last 10 years.

4. Improving our Efficiency and Effectiveness

The Department is committed to providing a high quality and efficient service to all of our customers and stakeholders. In 2013, we continued to ensure that we delivered value for money through the delivery of effective and efficient services. This section of the Report outlines the improvements which the Department implemented in 2013 to develop its efficiency and effectiveness in the context of the actions and performance indicators set out in the Department's Statement of Strategy 2011-2014.

7.1 Establishment of New Structures to Support the Reform Programme

In 2013, the Department established new structures to support the implementation of the reform programme underway across the education and training sector. A Public Service Reform Programme Office was established and a fulltime Programme Manager and a Shared Services Adviser were recruited. The office has been established to oversee the development and support the implementation of the Department's Integrated Reform Delivery Plan (IRDP). A shared services plan for the education and training sector was prepared in consultation with stakeholders and an external service delivery plan was finalised. The Public Service Reform Programme Office also led on the coordination of the Procurement Reform Programme for the Education and Training sector including developing proposals for the establishment of a Schools Procurement Unit. A Project Management Office (PMO) was established to lead on the overall reform programme for the Education and Training Boards and SOLAS. A full-time Programme Manager was assigned to the PMO and a number of projects were progressed under the auspices of that office during 2013.

7.2 Improving our Information and Communications Technology

7.2.1 Internal Departmental ICT Upgrade

In 2013, the IT Unit rolled out in excess of 900 new PCs to staff in the Dublin, Athlone and Tullamore offices, along with an upgrade to Windows 7, Office 2013 and installation of Unified Communications. Desk-top Video Conferencing (VC) was also implemented on a pilot basis, to complement the VC facilities in the main conference rooms.

New servers for back-end databases were purchased in 2013. These were commissioned and the software installed, in preparation for a major Oracle upgrade and migration from the AIX operating system to Windows, scheduled to commence in February 2014.

7.2.2 Development of Post-Primary Online Data (PPOD)

In 2013, a new Post-Primary Online Database (P-POD), which is a database hosted by the Department that allows post-primary schools to record enrolment information on their students and other data on the school itself, was developed. In late 2013, PPOD was successfully rolled out to all post-primary schools, on the esinet (education services interactive network) platform, replacing a previous system used by schools to submit pupil data every October. This data is critical to a number of processes in the Department and the State Examinations Commission. Schools can update pupil data on PPOD on an on-going basis, which provides the Department with more current data for its business processes.

7.2.3 Development of Primary Online Data (POD)

In 2013, work commenced on the development of a primary learner database POD (Primary Online Data), which will facilitate the collection of data on each pupil as they progress through primary school, building upon PPOD. This application will provide valuable data for policy formulation. It will also go some way towards reducing the administrative burden on schools, when fully implemented. A pilot of this application with a number of primary schools, is scheduled to commence in May 2014.

7.2.4 Updating the Payroll and On-line Claims Systems to Support New Measures

The Department operates one of the largest payrolls in the State, paying an average of 94,000 school employees every fortnight. The provisions of the Haddington Road Agreement and FEMPI (Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest Act) were implemented on schedule on the school employee payrolls. There were also significant enhancements to the school employee payrolls and OLCS (On-line Claims System) during 2013, to facilitate the implementation of Section 30 of the Teaching Council Act 2001, with effect from 28 January 2014.

7.2.5 Enhancements to the Financial Management System

Performance Budgeting was implemented on the FMS (Financial Management System) with effect from the 1st January 2013. Work continued on other FMS enhancements during 2013, including Prompt Payment Interest and preparation for the implementation of SEPA (Single Euro Payments Area) in 2014.

7.2.6 Other ICT Developments

In late 2013, a pilot of Sharepoint for the development of smaller applications was undertaken. This application for Irish Language Translations is scheduled to go live in early 2014.

As referred to at 6.5.1, an on-line application to facilitate schools applying for grants under the Summer Works Scheme was implemented in November 2013 on esinet.

Work also commenced in 2013 on the development of the Department's ICT Strategy for 2014-2018.

7.3 Expenditure by the Department in 2013

The Department's expenditure allocation for 2013 took account of a number of savings measures decided by Government, estimated to yield savings across the education sector of €90 million in 2013 and €123 million in a full year. However, notwithstanding the requirement to manage within a challenging expenditure ceiling, the education budget for 2013 did include additional funding for a number of important initiatives, including: continued implementation of the Literacy and Numeracy Strategy and reform of the Junior Cycle; connection of 200 additional schools to high speed broadband; funding for 6,500 places under the Labour Market Education and Training Fund; additional part-time higher education opportunities under the Springboard programme; funding of €5 million for ICT Skills Conversion Courses; and capital funding to allow the commencement in 2013 of works on 50 new schools and major extensions.

Net expenditure for the Department in 2013, at €7.918 billion, came in within the allocation. There was a net underspend of current expenditure of €14 million, €5 million of which was used to facilitate an excess on capital expenditure, leaving a net overall end of year underspend of €9 million.

7.4 Monitoring our Systems and Processes

The Internal Audit Unit at the Department is responsible for providing assurance to the Accounting Officer on the adequacy, efficiency and effectiveness of the Department's risk management, internal control systems and governance processes. The European Social Fund (ESF) Financial Control Unit ensures that Ireland complies with the regulatory requirements of the European Union in relation to the audit of ESF, promotes best practice in the management, control and audit of ESF in Ireland and ensures that audits are performed in accordance with international auditing standards in order to provide high quality, fair and balanced reports. Annual audit programmes are prepared under the auspices of the Audit Committee and both the Internal Audit Unit and the ESF Audit Authority report to the Committee on the conduct of these programmes and the

finalisation of audit reports. A total of seven reports were finalised in 2013 and both areas track, on a quarterly basis, progress on the implementation of recommendations arising from audit reports.

7.5 Support the Partnership Process and Good Industrial Relations Practice

Through its External Staff Relations Unit (ESRU), the Department continued to provide and operate an industrial relations framework and service at national level to manage the processing of industrial relations issues relating to the wider education sector. The functions of the ESRU include the promotion of compliance with Government pay policy throughout the wider education sector, the full implementation of national Public Service Agreements with regard to the education sector and provision of advice to line sections within the Department and the educational institutions on the application of employment law.

7.6 Human Resources

The Department supported the Public Service Reform initiative during 2013 in a number of ways including: a reduction in staffing numbers; the reassignment of staff on both a temporary and permanent basis to areas of critical need to ensure the continued delivery of key services; the implementation of new provisions such as updates to the Performance Management and Development System (PMDS) and to sick leave regulations; collaboration with the Human Resources (HR) Shared Service Centre *PeoplePoint* in the transition of certain Departmental HR and Pension functions to that service; and continued development of the Workforce Planning process.

All of the targets in 2013 in respect of the preparation for the transition of certain Departmental HR and Pension functions to the human resources shared service Centre *PeoplePoint* were met.

During the year the Department facilitated the redeployment of a number of its staff to work in *PeoplePoint*. and facilitated the release of a number of our key staff to the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform to work on other Shared Service initiatives such as the Payroll Shared Service and Procurement.

The provisions of the Haddington Road Agreement were implemented in full and a new Staff Mobility Policy as provided for under the Organisational Review Programme Action Plan was developed.

Department staffing numbers fell from 1213 whole time equivalents (WTEs) at the end of 2012 to 1196.58 WTEs at the end of 2013, which constitutes a further reduction of 1.35%. Total staffing in the Department has reduced by approximately 9% from 1,316 WTEs at the end of 2008 before the introduction of the moratorium on recruitment and promotion.

7.6.1 Staff Training and Development

During 2013, the Department's Staff Training and Development Unit continued to engage with staff and management to identify priority training and development needs. To meet those needs a range of targeted and customised training was available to staff. Some 3,000 training days were provided during the year.

A major training programme was undertaken across the Department to support the roll out of Windows 7 / Office 2013. Other training, which was mainly delivered in-house, was provided in areas including Financial Management, Pensions Administration, Business Process Improvement, Freedom of Information and Procurement. The Department also continued to prioritise management training to enhance its capacity to adequately meet new and evolving challenges through the provision of training programmes for middle and senior managers.

In addition to training and development for administrative grades, tailored training support was provided for the Inspectorate, the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), the Planning and Building Unit (PBU) and the IT Unit to meet their specific professional and technical training requirements.

Separate to the organised training and development outlined above, the Department continued to foster a learning culture by providing support for staff to attend further education courses in their own time. These courses were in areas relevant to the work of the Department and the broader civil and public service and included Strategic Management, Governance, Irish Language Translation, Educational Psychology, Human Resources, Public Management, Information Technology, Payroll and Education.

7.7 Business Planning

The Department's annual business planning process is central to the timely and successful achievement of our goals. Each year, sections are requested to identify their critical tasks for the coming year with reference to documents such as our Statement of Strategy and to plan for their implementation via the business planning process. In addition to identifying critical tasks, the business planning process also provides an opportunity for staff to consider business process improvement which leads to greater efficiency and cost-effectiveness and improved customer services, all of which are key elements of the Government's Public Service Reform Plan. All sections of the Department participated in the business planning process for 2013.

7.8 Business Process Improvement

The implementation of a structured approach to streamlining and improving business processes using the Business Process Improvement (BPI) Lean Six Sigma methodology commenced in 2013. Pilot projects were carried out in the Payroll Division and Pensions Unit. The project teams, comprising staff within the relevant business unit, were trained on the tools and techniques of process improvement, skills for managing change in the workplace and they were also coached through the projects.

Following a review of the pilot phase, by the BPI Steering Committee, a second wave of projects began in October 2013.

7.9 Overview of the Department's Energy Usage in 2013

The main energy users in the Department are our Athlone and Dublin Offices, which accounted for 36% and 35% of our energy consumption respectively, followed by the network of local offices at 15% and our Tullamore Office at 14%. Nearly two thirds of the energy consumed in our office buildings is for lighting, office equipment and catering, while the remaining office energy consumption is on heating.

In 2013, the Department spent €646,944 on energy, consisting of €477,803 on electricity, €135,206 on Gas and €33,935 on liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) and oil.

7.9.1 Actions Undertaken in 2013 to Increase our Energy Efficiency

A number of actions were undertaken during the year to reduce our energy consumption including: the installation of new condenser energy efficient boilers and immersion water heaters in our offices in Marlborough Street; the installation of triple glazed windows in the older two-storey building in Athlone; and phase one of attic insulation was carried out in the Tullamore office.

The new PCs, which were deployed to approximately 950 staff in Dublin, Athlone and Tullamore, use 25% less power than the older PCs they replaced. It is estimated that this change will realise a saving in energy costs of approximately €40,000 per year or €200,000 over the anticipated 5 year lifecycle of the new PCs.

7.9.2 Building Management System Audits

The Department continued to carry out Building Management System (BMS) Audits on a regular basis during the year. These audits seek to achieve energy savings by identifying ways to reduce consumption, such as the optimisation of time schedules, temperature set points and control strategies. Consequently, many time schedules, thermostat settings and air-conditioning systems were adjusted downwards.

7.9.3 Increasing Energy Awareness

A campaign to encourage Staff to 'SWITCH OFF' office equipment and lights when not in use was initiated in many of our offices. Staff lectures, presentations and workshops to raise awareness on energy efficiency were offered in many Department locations. Energy team meetings and monthly energy reports were prepared to show progress and identify areas for improvement.

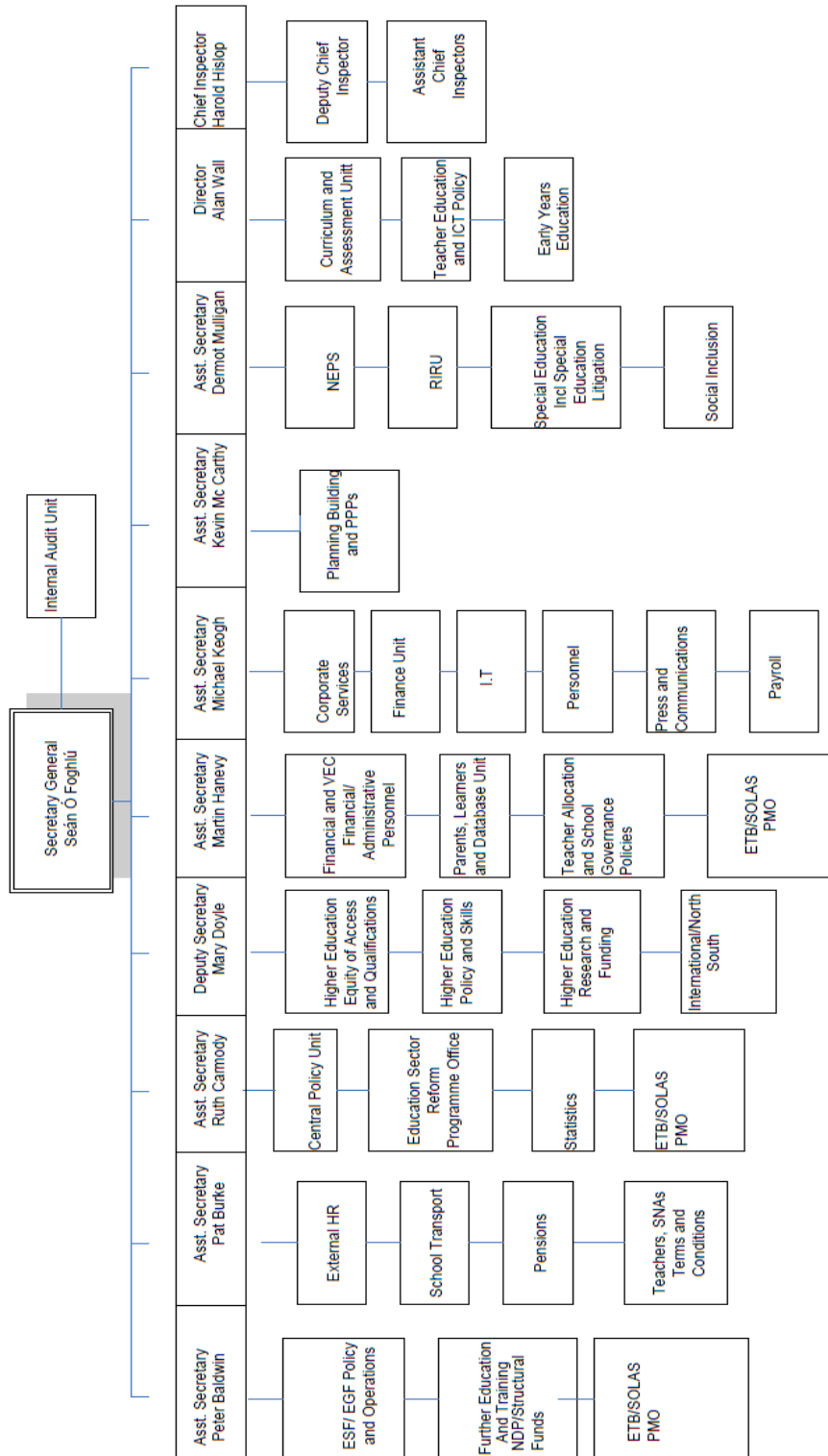
7.9.4 Further Energy Saving Actions Planned for 2014

A number of further energy saving actions are planned for 2014 including, phase 2 of the installation of attic insulation in the Tullamore office and an upgrade to the lighting system in the underground car park in Marlborough Street via the installation of lighting sensors and LED bulbs. The insulation of the North facing sash windows in House 28, Dublin has been proposed and the installation of light sensors will be examined for the Tullamore office. A review of insulation levels on all sites is to be carried out.

The Department will continue to promote the 'Optimising Power @ Work' energy awareness campaign. Optimising Power @ Work is the OPW's state-wide staff energy awareness campaign, the overall aim of which is to accelerate the reduction of energy use, cut energy bills and contribute towards the 33% energy reduction target for the Public Sector in Ireland by 2020.

Appendix A – Organisation Chart

Organisation Chart – Department of Education and Skills



Appendix B - Bodies under the Aegis of the Department

An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta	(COGG)
Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse	(CICA)
Education Finance Board ¹	(EFB)
Grangegorman Development Agency	(GGDA)
Higher Education Authority	(HEA)
Léargas - The Exchange Bureau	
National Centre for Guidance in Education	(NCGE)
National Council for Curriculum and Assessment	(NCCA)
National Council for Special Education	(NCSE)
Quality and Qualifications Ireland ²	(QQI)
Residential Institutions Redress Board	(RIRB)
Residential Institutions Review Committee	(RIRC)
Residential Institutions Statutory Fund	(RISF)
Skillnets Ltd	
SOLAS (An tSeirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna)	
State Examinations Commission	(SEC)
The Teaching Council	

¹ The Education Finance Board was dissolved in March 2013 and its functions were taken over by the RISF

² QQI was established in late 2012 as a new integrated agency replacing the Further Education and Training Awards Council, the Higher Education and Training Awards Council and the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland, and incorporating the functions of the Irish Universities Quality Board.

Appendix C – Direct Links to our Website www.education.ie

Statistical Information	http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Statistics/
Inspectorate Reports	http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Inspection-Reports-Publications/
Education Legislation	http://www.education.ie/en/The-Education-System/Legislation/Education-Legislation.html
All Publications	http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/
Circulars and Forms	http://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/
Special Education	http://www.education.ie/en/The-Education-System/Special-Education/
School Design	http://www.education.ie/en/School-Design/
Press and Events	http://www.education.ie/en/Press-Events/
Services and Information for Parents	http://www.education.ie/en/Parents/
Services and Information for Education Staff	http://www.education.ie/en/Education-Staff/
Services and Information for Learners	http://www.education.ie/en/Learners/